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Commission for Social Development
Forty-seventh session
4-13 February 2009
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Provisional annotated agenda and proposed organization of work

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
   (a) Priority theme: social integration;
   (b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups:
      (i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons;
      (ii) World Programme of Action for Youth;
      (iii) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002;
      (iv) Family issues, policies and programmes;
   (c) Emerging issues: "The global crises and their impact on social development".
4. Programme questions and other matters:
   (a) Programme performance and implementation for the biennium 2006-2007;
   (b) Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011;
   (c) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
5. Provisional agenda for the forty-eighth session of the Commission.
6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its forty-seventh session.

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Annotations

1. Election of officers

Rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council stipulates that, at the commencement of the first meeting of a regular session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its members a Chairperson, one or more Vice-Chairpersons and such other officers as may be required. Following the established practice, the Commission shall elect a Chairperson and four Vice-Chairpersons and designate one of the Vice-Chairpersons also as Rapporteur (Vice-Chairperson-and-Rapporteur).

In accordance with subparagraph (c) of its decision 2002/210 of 13 February 2002, the Economic and Social Council decided that immediately following the closure of a regular session, the Commission for Social Development would hold the first meeting of its subsequent regular session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chairperson and other members of the Bureau. Consequently, the Commission held the first meeting of its forty-seventh session on 15 February 2008, immediately following the closure of the forty-sixth session, and elected by acclamation Kirsti Lintonen (Finland) as Chairperson of the Commission and Lilit Toutkhalian (Armenia), Tareq Md. Ariful Islam (Bangladesh) and Lorena Giménez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) as Vice-Chairpersons.

The Group of African States subsequently nominated Soha Gendi (Egypt) to represent the regional group on the Bureau as Vice-Chairperson-elect. At the opening meeting of the forty-seventh session of the Commission, on 4 February 2009, the nominee will be elected as Vice-Chairperson. At the same meeting, the Commission will designate one of its Vice-Chairpersons also having rapporteurial responsibilities.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure requires that, after the election of its officers at the beginning of each session, the Commission shall adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda. The provisional agenda and documentation for the forty-seventh session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2008/244 of 24 July 2008.

The proposed organization of work of the Commission for Social Development at its forty-seventh session (see annex I) has been prepared pursuant to relevant decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to facilitate the consideration of agenda items within the time frame available and in accordance with the conference services allocated to the Commission. The timetable should be considered tentative and indicative: if the Commission completes its consideration of an item ahead of schedule, it may wish to proceed immediately to the next item.

The Commission is scheduled to meet from Wednesday, 4 February, to Friday, 13 February 2009. Arrangements have been made to hold morning and afternoon meetings during the session: morning meetings will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and afternoon meetings from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Documentation

Provisional annotated agenda and proposed organization of work (E/CN.5/2009/1)

3. **Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly**

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/46 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", the Commission will undertake regular assessment of the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the further initiatives adopted at Geneva.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/CN.5/2009/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/18 of 24 July 2008 on promoting full employment and decent work for all (E/CN.5/2009/4)

(a) Priority theme: social integration

In its resolution 2008/19 of 24 July 2008, the Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle would be "Social integration", taking into account its interrelationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. The Commission will review the theme at its forty-seventh session in 2009. The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme for the policy part of the 2009-2010 cycle.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on promoting social integration (E/CN.5/2009/2)

(b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

(i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

(ii) World Programme of Action for Youth

(iii) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

(iv) Family issues, policies and programmes

The Commission will consider issues pertaining to the situation of social groups. It will have before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: progress and constraints with respect to the well-being of youth and their role in civil society (A/64/61-E/2009/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on the strategic implementation framework for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (E/CN.5/2009/5)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development on the monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (E/CN.5/2009/6)

(c) Emerging issues

In its resolution 2006/18 of 26 July 2006, the Economic and Social Council decided to include the agenda item entitled "Emerging issues" in the programme of work of the Commission. The members of the Bureau, in consultation with their respective regional groups, agreed that the theme for discussion under this agenda item during the forty-seventh session would be "The global crises and their impact on social development". A note by the Secretariat would be available to facilitate the discussion.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the global crises and their impact on social development

4. Programme questions and other matters

(a) Programme performance and implementation for the biennium 2006-2007

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 39/238 of 18 December 1984, the Commission will have before it excerpts from the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/63/70).

(b) Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011

The Commission will have before it the proposed programme of work of the Secretariat for the biennium 2010-2011 in the field of social development.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the draft programme of work of the Division for Social Policy and Development for the biennium 2010-2011

(c) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Nomination of members of the Board of the Institute

The Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development is composed of 10 members who are nominated by the Commission and confirmed by the Economic and Social Council for a term of four years, renewable once for a further two years, in accordance with Commission resolution 10 (XXV).

The Commission, at its forty-seventh session, will be called upon to nominate a number of new members and to renominate some existing members of the Board. The Council will be called upon to confirm those nominations in 2009.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General on the nominations of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2009/7)

Report of the Board of the Institute

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Board of the Institute submits to the Commission a report on the progress of its work. The Commission will have before it the report of the Board covering the biennium 2007-2008.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2009/8)

5. **Provisional agenda for the forty-eighth session of the Commission**

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its forty-eighth session, together with an indication of the documentation to be submitted for its consideration.

Documentation

Draft provisional agenda for the forty-eighth session of the Commission (E/CN.5/2009/L.__)

6. **Adoption of the report of the Commission on its forty-seventh session**

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its forty-seventh session.

Documentation

Draft report of the Commission on its forty-seventh session (E/CN.5/2009/L.__)

Annex I

Proposed organization of work (4-13 February 2009)

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation/programme*
Week of 2-6 February 2009		
Wednesday, 4 February		
a.m.	1. Election of officers	
	2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters	E/CN.5/2009/1
	3. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:	Introduction of documentation under agenda item 3 (a) and (b)
	(a) Priority theme: social integration	Report of the Secretary-General on promoting social integration (E/CN.5/2009/2)
	(b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups	Report of the Secretary-General on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/CN.5/2009/3)
	(i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons	Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/18 on promoting full employment and decent work for all (E/CN.5/2009/4)
	(ii) World Programme of Action for Youth	
	(iii) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002	Note by the Secretary-General on the strategic implementation framework for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (E/CN.5/2009/5)
	(iv) Family issues, policies and programmes	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development (E/CN.5/2009/6)
	3 (a) (*continued*)	Presentation of the outcome of the Civil Society Forum held on 3 February 2009
		General discussion
p.m.	3 (a) (*continued*)	Panel discussion

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation/programme*
Thursday, 5 February		
a.m.	3 (a) (*continued*)	General discussion
p.m.	3 (a) (*concluded*)	General discussion
Friday, 6 February		
a.m.	3 (b) (*continued*)	General discussion
p.m.	3 (b) (*continued*)	General discussion
Week of 9-13 February 2009		
Monday, 9 February		
a.m.	3 (b) (*concluded*)	General discussion
p.m.	3 (c) (*continued*)	General discussion
		Panel discussion
		Note by the Secretariat on the global crises and their impact on social development
Tuesday, 10 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and 3 (b)	Informal consultations
		1 p.m.: deadline for submission of draft proposals
p.m.	3 (a) and 3 (b)	Informal consultations
Wednesday, 11 February		
a.m.	4. Programme questions and other matters	Note by the Secretary-General on the nominations of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2009/7)
	(a) Programme performance and implementation for the biennium 2006-2007	
	(b) Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2009/8)
	(c) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development	
		Note by the Secretariat transmitting the draft programme of work of the Division for Social Policy and Development for the biennium 2010-2011

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation/programme*
p.m.	3 (a) and 3 (b)	Informal consultations
Thursday, 12 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and 3 (b)	**Introduction of draft proposals**
		Informal consultations
p.m.	3 (a) and 3 (b)	Informal consultations
Friday, 13 February		
a.m. and p.m.	5. Provisional agenda for the forty-sixth session of the Commission	***Action on draft proposals***
		Adoption of the provisional agenda for the next session
	6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its forty-fifth session	Adoption of the report
		Closure of the session[a]

[a] In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2002/210, the Commission, immediately following the closure of the forty-seventh session, will hold the first meeting of its forty-eighth session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chairman and other members of the Bureau, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council.

Annex II

Membership of the Commission for Social Development at its forty-seventh session (2009)

(46 members; four-year term)

Membership	*Term expires at close of the session in the year:*
1. Andorra	2011
2. Angola	2009
3. Argentina	2012
4. Armenia	2012
5. Bangladesh	2009
6. Benin	2011
7. Bolivia	2009
8. Cameroon	2011
9. China	2009
10. Cuba	2011
11. Czech Republic	2009
12. Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2009
13. Democratic Republic of the Congo	2009
14. El Salvador	2012
15. Egypt	2011
16. Finland	2009
17. France	2012
18. Germany	2012
19. Ghana	2012
20. Guatemala	2012
21. India	2011
22. Italy	2009
23. Jamaica	2011
24. Japan	2012
25. Mexico	2011

Membership	*Term expires at close of the session in the year*
26. Monaco	2009
27. Myanmar	2009
28. Namibia	2011
29. Nepal	2011
30. Netherlands	2009
31. Nigeria	2012
32. Pakistan	2012
33. Paraguay	2009
34. Republic of Korea	2012
35. Russian Federation	2012
36. Senegal	2012
37. Slovakia	2011
38. South Africa	2009
39. Spain	2011
40. Sudan	2012
41. Turkey	2011
42. Ukraine	2009
43. United Arab Emirates	2011
44. United Republic of Tanzania	2009
45. United States of America	2012
46. Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2009

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Commission for Social Development
Forty-seventh session
4-13 February 2009
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting social integration

Promoting social integration

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/19, in which the Council decided that the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development should be "Social integration", taking into account its relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all.

* E/CN.5/2009/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, defined the objective of social development in general and social integration in particular as the creation of "a society for all". Social integration is the process of building the values, relations and institutions essential for the creation of such an equitable and dynamic society, where all individuals, regardless of their race, sex, language or religion, can fully exercise their rights and responsibilities on an equal basis with others and contribute to society.

2. The very goal of social integration is to bring all social groups and individuals into the political, social, cultural and economic structures of a society so that they can participate in the decision-making process and improve their access to opportunities. The process of social integration requires the creation of a solidarity-based consensus that exclusion should be minimized and all those who are disadvantaged should be helped by the society at large.

3. Since the World Summit for Social Development, international efforts to advance social integration have largely focused on addressing the special needs of certain social groups. As a result, several new mandates and instruments have been adopted such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing,[1] the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,[2] the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[3] and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[4] Although addressing the special needs of certain social groups is critical to advancing their inclusion in the mainstream of society, this falls short of the broad social integration paradigm endorsed by the World Summit for Social Development. At the national level, there have been numerous efforts to identify the risk factors of social exclusion and many Governments have pursued policies aimed at combating exclusion, often with a focus on the most marginalized groups or individuals.

4. In the current phase of globalization, labour markets have been evolving in the direction of greater levels of economic insecurity and greater levels of most forms of inequality, many of which have a direct adverse effect on social cohesion. In the longer term, situations of pervasive unemployment, underemployment or poverty generate social exclusion. Moreover, socio-demographic changes such as rapid urbanization, population ageing, increased migration and the break-up of traditional family structures pose particular challenges to social inclusion. Consequently, effective social integration and social inclusion measures are urgently needed to address a widening spectrum of risks, vulnerabilities and exclusions.

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[1] *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] See General Assembly resolution 50/81.

[3] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

[4] General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

II. The importance of social integration for social development

A. Social integration and related concepts

5. As defined in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Development,[5] *social integration* is both a goal and a dynamic and principled process in which societies engage to advance social development. It aims at fostering stable, safe and just societies, where all human rights are respected and all enjoy equality of opportunities, including vulnerable groups and persons. It is also understood as the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life.

6. Disregard for social integration may lead to violence, conflict and abuse. It perpetuates inequality and exclusion. It prevents individuals from reaching their full potential and contributing actively to society.

7. The concept of *social inclusion* sometimes equated with social integration, has been used with increased frequency, both in intergovernmental debate and in policymaking. It is sometimes thought that the concept of inclusion better reflects the goals of social justice and equality, especially in the context of achieving "a society for all". Social inclusion is often seen as an action Governments can take to create more integrated societies. The degree of social inclusion also depends on the level of support from local communities, civil society and families and their participation in the life of a society as citizens with both rights and responsibilities.

8. It is increasingly recognized that economic inclusion is key to achieving overall inclusion. Economic inclusion depends on economic growth but it is mostly understood as equality of opportunity in employment and training. The provision of minimum standards of living, including access to health care, education and housing, are the basic elements of socio-economic inclusion.

9. The term *social exclusion* is often used to denote the absence of social inclusion, but the two notions are not exact opposites. People may be excluded from society in some respects while being included in others. Certain social groups may achieve internal cohesion while the society as whole may be fragmented.

10. Exclusion has economic, social and cultural dimensions. Economic aspects of exclusion encompass exclusion from the labour market and access to assets. Social and cultural aspects refer to exclusion from access to social services, means of communication, community and family support or State protection. Such economic, social and cultural exclusion leads to political exclusion, where individuals are prevented from exercising their rights as citizens, including access to decision-making.

11. Social exclusion may be linked to the existence of discrimination and/or be an outcome of market failures. It could also have its origins in unique power or exploitative relations. It is often rooted in unequal patterns of development between rural and urban areas and unequal distribution of assets, including human capital.

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[5] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

12. Social exclusion is closely related to the notion of vulnerability that stems from unequal relations rather than occasional economic or environmental troubles. Socially excluded groups and individuals are made vulnerable not only because they do not have adequate assets to sustain them in times of crisis. They also endure discrimination and are typically locked into unfair, mostly informal networks based on discriminatory and abusive patron-client relations perpetuating their vulnerability.

13. In different countries, different groups are excluded. In some, the unemployed may be the most vulnerable. In others, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities are at the greatest risk of exclusion. In many countries migrants face particular disadvantages. It is important to discern the different causes of exclusion that particular groups or individuals may face in a particular national context and understand the processes leading to exclusion.

14. The ultimate goal of social integration and policies aiming at the reduction of exclusion and the promotion of inclusion is *social cohesion*. Social cohesion denotes a capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization and conflict. In a socially cohesive society, people share values that help to reduce inequalities in wealth and income and human relations, and social bonds are strong.

15. In a socially integrated society, all belong, while in a socially cohesive society there is also a clear consensus on what creates a social compact with acknowledged rights and responsibilities for all citizens. Thus, social cohesion can be understood as the willingness of individuals to cooperate and work together at all levels of society to achieve collective goals.

16. Social integration as a process leading to the establishment of "a society for all" is desirable from an ethical and practical point of view as there are high social, political and economic costs of inequality and exclusion. Social exclusion is linked to increased poverty, reduced growth, higher incidence of crime, social upheaval and threats to public safety.

17. From an ethical point of view, exclusion and destitution are contrary to the basic values of human dignity and human rights. Social exclusion generates and deepens inequalities between people and compromises social justice. Politically, inequalities and exclusion weaken democracy and threaten peace and stability and may lead to violence, civil unrest and open conflict.

18. Economically, social inequalities prevent segments of society from contributing to growth through consumption, savings and investment, and in that way undermine overall economic growth. Inequalities owing to social status, income, geographical location, gender, age, ethnicity or immigration status reduce social mobility. Limited social mobility deepens divisions in society and may lead to fragmentation and impair growth and poverty reduction. It limits the prospects of people living in poverty to increase their productivity and earnings and thereby move out of poverty.

19. Gender discrimination is one of the most pervasive and prevalent forms of institutionalized inequality. Gender cuts across all other social categories and is a marker of identity and inequalities between men and women in all societies. Just as gender discrimination is a grave obstacle to social integration, gender equality should be considered a key measure of social integration.

20. Beyond helping all groups and individuals to gain access to mainstream society, social integration requires the transformation of those social norms and principles that underpin unequal relations. We have to be mindful, however, that not all societies are geared towards inclusion. There may be systems in any given society that are faulty, and inclusion into such systems may not result in social integration but rather perpetuate the existing unequal power relations. Above all, there should be no forms of forced integration, which may be resisted and even considered a violation of human rights.

21. In this context, it is worth noting that there may be certain groups, such as indigenous peoples or religious groups, that do not wish to be "integrated" into a society as it may cause them to loose their identities. Nevertheless, these groups generally welcome socially inclusive policies focusing on achieving greater equality and may desire to be part of an inclusive society provided that they are consulted in the process. Sometimes a preferred term for such groups is "social inclusion".

B. Regional perspectives

Africa

22. In the African context, social exclusion is often seen as a direct result of poverty, which hinders people's participation in economic, social and political spheres of life. Besides generalized poverty, other major causes of exclusion include income inequalities; unequal rural-urban development; unequal distribution of assets, such as land; discrimination based on gender, race, disability and ethnicity; unequal access to social services; lack of social protection strategies; market failures; and unenforced rights.[6]

23. Conflicts and instability are another major cause of social exclusion in Africa — especially for those directly affected, such as internally displaced persons and refugees — as is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS: 68 percent of the HIV/AIDS-infected population lives in sub-Saharan Africa.[7] Violent conflicts and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have given rise to some of the most vulnerable groups in Africa: orphans and infected children together with older women left to care for these children. Orphan children are much less likely to be enrolled in school, which will eventually put them at further risk of social exclusion in adulthood.

24. In 2007, there were close to 12.7 million internally displaced persons in Africa, close to half the people forcibly displaced worldwide. Their number grew that year by 1.6 million, as new or protracted conflicts and generalized violence caused displacement in 13 countries.[8]

25. In order to address the distressing effects of social exclusion, the African Union (AU) ministers in charge of social development adopted the "African Common Position on Social Integration" at the conclusion of their meeting held in

[6] Report of the Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting on developing supplementary targets and indicators to strengthen social inclusion, gender equality and health promotion in the Millennium Development Goals in Africa, Addis Ababa, 7-9 May 2008 (Economic Commission for Africa document ECA/ACGS/MDGs-PAM/EGM/RP/2008/2) and background document.

[7] UNAIDS, "AIDS epidemic update" (Geneva, December 2007).

[8] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007" (Geneva, 2008).

Windhoek in October 2008. This document notes the prevailing marginalization and exclusion experienced by women, children, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older people, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrant workers and their families and other groups. More importantly, it encourages AU member States to promote and accelerate a human rights and human-centred sustainable social development agenda for the continent that is underpinned by a social inclusion agenda placing employment at the centre of development, with an emphasis on extending skills development and comprehensive social protection to all members of society.

Asia and the Pacific

26. The most important trends affecting social inclusion in the Asia-Pacific region include growing inequality, labour migration and population ageing. The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2008[9] observes growing inequalities in the region owing to the neglect of agriculture, noting that such inequality may impede growth and threaten social cohesion by leaving people's skills idle.

27. As of 2005, there were 58 million international migrants in the region, reflecting the increased mobility of people in search of temporary employment within the region. Despite the growth of international migration, protecting the rights of migrant workers has not been properly addressed. Although there are bilateral agreements regulating the movement of workers across borders, they have had little impact on the treatment of migrant workers, who continue to face discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Moreover, there is a growing concern that while migration can benefit families, the prolonged absence of a family member seeking employment often causes marital instability, the break-up of families and social costs to children left behind, including poor performance in school, violent behaviour and delinquency.[10]

28. The Asia-Pacific region is home to the largest population of older persons in the world, currently numbering 400 million and expanding twice as quickly as the general population. Mindful of the growing challenges of population ageing, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has led the region in reviewing the progress achieved in efforts to build a "society for all ages". Thus ESCAP was instrumental in the promotion of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, endorsed by countries of the region in 1999. The plan serves as a regional platform to meet the challenges of population ageing, focusing on specific areas of concern including income security, employment, health, nutrition and social services and the community. To assist the member States in the implementation of the plan, ESCAP issued a set of guidelines specifying time-bound goals and targets that should be established at national and regional levels. Similarly, ESCAP undertook the first regional review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Western Asia

29. Reflecting regional concerns, the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) concentrates on the determinants of

[9] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.7.

[10] Ibid.

exclusion, such as illiteracy, unemployment and economic inequality, gender discrimination, migration status, geographical location, cultural norms and violations of rights.

30. The region faces long- and short-term refugee problems and hosts a significant migrant labour force. It is considered that many people will remain outside the reach of the developmental benefits of poverty eradication programmes because they lack the status of citizen.

31. In Western Asia poverty is not always the primary cause of exclusion from spheres of participation, opportunities and access to services. As a concept and an experience, exclusion brings together deprivation, discrimination and disempowerment. It is thus thought that aiming at poverty eradication may not address the root causes or societal biases and institutional processes that produce exclusion. A social exclusion analysis is seen as useful for focusing on discrimination and its relation to inequality.[11]

32. In the region, social exclusion is exacerbated by conflict and displacement. In 2007 there were nearly 900,000 new IDPs in the Middle East, as existing conflicts escalated, with a total number reaching 3.5 million and nearly twice as many refugees. Throughout the region, according to data collected by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, minorities were at a greater risk of displacement.

Latin America and the Caribbean

33. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the idea of social cohesion has emerged in response to high poverty (especially among the indigenous and those of African descent), extreme inequality and various forms of discrimination. The region has the highest income inequality in the world and inequality owing to discrimination is still one of the most important problems for social cohesion. Causes of discrimination in Latin America relate to "being poor" (36 per cent), followed by "being old" (16 per cent), having insufficient education (12 per cent), not having contacts (7 per cent) or on account of race (6 per cent). Educational disparities, in turn, are often attributed to ethnic origin, with 34 per cent of indigenous children attending secondary school as compared with 48 per cent in the general population. The overall dropout rate among indigenous pupils is almost a third higher than among non-indigenous pupils.[12]

34. Based on a sense of belonging, social cohesion is predicated on citizens' willingness to support democracy, play a role in public affairs and deliberations and place trust in society's institutions. Solidarity with groups suffering discrimination and exclusion is considered necessary for socially inclusive policies to be successfully implemented while a sense of belonging is built out of greater equity and a greater acceptance of diversity.[13]

35. Since the high degree of inequality and social exclusion in the region is considered a serious obstacle to the smooth functioning of democracy, social cohesion is regarded as an effective means to achieve full citizenship, consolidate

[11] ESCWA, "Social Exclusion in the ESCWA Region" (Beirut, 2008).

[12] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Social Panorama of Latin America 2007" (United Nations publication, Sales No. S.07.II.G.124).

[13] ECLAC, "Social cohesion: inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Santiago, 2007).

democracy and achieve overall well-being in a society. The expansion of economic opportunity, supporting the development of personal capabilities, the promotion of solidarity-based inclusive social protection systems against vulnerabilities and social risks, efficiently managing public finances and recognition of the pluricultural nature of societies are considered good ways of promoting social cohesion.

Developed countries

36. Social exclusion is pervasive in developing and developed regions alike. Promoting social inclusion with a view to preventing and eradicating poverty and exclusion and supporting the integration and participation of all in economic and social life features prominently in the European Union's social policy agenda. Building social inclusion in the European Union mainly focuses on poverty eradication and employment policies, as it is considered that poverty and unemployment are the two most important factors causing exclusion.

37. In 2007, 16 per cent of the European population remained at risk of financial poverty, 20 per cent lived in substandard housing, 10 per cent lived in households where nobody worked and long-term unemployment approached 4 per cent.[14]

38. Since the adoption of common objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion by the European Council at its meeting held in Nice, France in 2000, member States have developed national action plans against poverty and social exclusion. An analysis of those action plans confirms that long-term unemployment, low income, low professional qualification, low education level and poor health are major risk factors for social exclusion in European countries.

39. The European Union has also identified several groups at greater risk of social exclusion, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, single parents, migrants and ethnic minorities (including the Roma population), the homeless, ex-inmates, people with drug and substance abuse problems and those living in a situation of multiple disadvantages.

40. In 2006, over 2.5 million temporary labour migrants arrived in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while permanent migration increased by about 5 per cent. For many developed countries, including the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the most challenging social integration issues relate to the social, economic and cultural integration of immigrants.

41. Indigenous peoples in the countries mentioned above consistently lag behind non-indigenous groups on most indicators of well-being. They live shorter lives, have poorer health and education, endure higher unemployment and earn less than the general population. In all of these countries, indigenous peoples' rates of poverty, substance abuse, suicide and incarceration are much higher than those of the general population.

42. In several developed countries, integration as a form of social policy has raised questions of diminished cultural diversity. Some countries experience a shift of responsibility for participating in society and communal life away from the

[14] Commission of the European Communities, "Modernizing social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market", Brussels, 17 October 2007 (document COM(2007) 620 final).

individual onto the Government, resulting in lower civic engagement. This phenomenon can be illustrated by several social cohesion indicators such as lower voter turnout in most OECD countries in the last decade and fewer than half of OECD citizens reporting high trust in different public institutions. Another negative trend is a continuous rise in the prison population of OECD countries over the past 15 years. On the positive side, the rates of work accidents, strikes and suicides have declined.[15]

Interregional cooperation

43. The European Union and Latin American Governments share the promotion of social cohesion as key policy priorities. The Forum on Social Cohesion, held in Santiago, Chile from 23 to 25 September 2007, allowed the two groups of countries to exchange experiences in the formulation and implementation of social cohesion policies, including poverty alleviation, measures against discrimination and exclusion and the recognition of fundamental social rights.

44. A Development Account project involving all regional commissions, entitled "Interregional cooperation to strengthen social inclusion, gender equality and health promotion in the Millennium Development Goals process", is currently under way. The project aims at developing additional targets and indicators within the current framework to measure progress towards the Goals, taking into account the inclusion of vulnerable groups, the empowerment of women and health promotion. The common view of the regional commissions is that social exclusion has to be addressed if the Goals are to be met. Promotion of the social inclusion of women and gender equality in the Goals is considered especially important.[16]

C. Social, economic and political trends and social integration

45. In many regions and countries, the growth of participatory democracy is giving rise to heightened awareness among people of the significance of social justice, equality and universality of human rights. The efforts at decentralization of administration and devolution of political power have generally resulted in the formation of more inclusive and participatory policy processes.

46. There is also a growing recognition of the importance of diversity and multiculturalism and the value and contribution of ethnic and cultural differences to the building of society.

47. In the area of employment, concept of decent work, with its basic tenets of rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, is gradually gaining importance and has the potential of leading to social integration as well.

48. Nevertheless, despite the recognition that only cohesive societies are well positioned to respond to social and economic change, too little is being done to promote social cohesion and many forms of social exclusion are on the rise. As noted in the 2005 review of the World Summit for Social Development, not only has globalization led to greater exclusion but the social integration component of

[15] OECD, "Society at a glance: OECD social indicators" (Paris, 2006).

[16] Expert group meetings on developing supplementary targets and indicators for social inclusion, population, gender, equality and health promotion to strengthen the Millennium Development Goals process.

development strategies has largely been ignored. There has been insufficient progress on social policy in general and on social impact analysis and policies promoting social integration in particular. Despite the pronounced commitments to internationally agreed development goals, the promise of taking action towards social integration remains largely unfulfilled.

49. The tendency to rely on market mechanisms to achieve social and economic objectives since the 1980s has not helped advance social integration. This shift in the development approach significantly reduced the ability of the State to promote socially desirable objectives, such as social integration, while inequalities intensified in countries as a result of market-oriented reforms. The current financial crisis may finally reverse this trend.

50. Recent economic trends associated with globalization have run counter to social integration in many parts of the world. The poor and the marginalized have largely been excluded from the benefits of globalization as current employment trends are increasingly producing greater segmentation in the labour market. Although economic growth and globalization of production and markets have led to higher levels of labour participation, many of the new jobs are informal, unstable and badly paid, offering no social protection, while some existing types of employment are made obsolete and economically expendable. The resulting perception of globalization favouring some at the expense of others poses an additional challenge to achieving social integration.

51. Among other trends affecting social integration, growing inequalities and increased mobility within and between countries, the rapid pace of urbanization and population ageing stand out. In most developing countries, a long-standing neglect and lack of investment in agriculture has led to the impoverishment and marginalization of rural communities and forced many people into urban areas which lack economic opportunities. New patterns of subjugation have emerged, whereby those swelling the ranks of the urban poor are cut off from their traditional communities and struggle to gain access to basic amenities such as shelter, water and electricity. Some of the most visible signs of social exclusion in urban areas are housing deprivation, homelessness and expanding slum areas with no basic services. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme estimates that 36.5 per cent of the urban population in the developing world lives in slums, with the rate reaching a staggering 62 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.[17]

52. Discrimination, stigmatization, racism, xenophobia and gender-based violence continue to be some of the biggest barriers to social integration. Abuse within families, often based on patriarchal relations, remains a daily reality of countless women and children. At the same time, more recent forms of stigma and discrimination such as those related to HIV/AIDS status are widespread in many societies.

53. Labour migration has accelerated in pace with expanding trade liberalization and economic interaction among countries. Migrant workers and their families, often exploited and employed mainly in low-paying jobs with no labour rights or any form of social protection, continue to face major obstacles to integration in their host countries. The integration of migrants into the host country society, moreover, should not result in the loss of social and cultural ties with the country of origin. To

[17] UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009* (Nairobi, 2008).

the contrary, the maintenance of ties with the country of origin and concurrent openness towards the new country, its culture and people, are both necessary for successful integration. In fact, the process of social integration depends on the degree of cultural adaptation, including the willingness and ability to develop close links with the host country without losing links to the country of origin, in effect developing a "dual identity".

54. Although it is often recognized that countries benefit from homogenous structures in their societies, there are numerous examples of countries with diverse and vibrant ethnic communities that have built dynamic economies offering migrants opportunities to succeed. For migrants, specific aspects of successful integration include equal access to public institutions; respect for cultures and religions; knowledge of the language, culture and institutions of the host country; and a voice in the democratic process.

55. Some countries experience rapid expansion of young populations while, in others, the population is rapidly ageing. Whereas socio-economic background, gender, migrant status or religious beliefs can lead to exclusion of all age groups, youth and the elderly may face double discrimination because of their age.

56. Lack of education and decent employment opportunities are key factors limiting young people's social integration. Of the 130 million illiterate people in the world, nearly 60 per cent are young women.[18] Youth also make up 44 per cent of the total unemployed, although they only represent 25 per cent of the working-age population. The relative disadvantage of youth in the labour market is more pronounced in developing than in developed economies.[19] What makes it even more significant is that young people in these regions account for more than 85 per cent of the global youth population.

57. Within the areas of education and employment, girls and young women frequently face an additional threat of social exclusion based on their age and gender. Young mothers are particularly vulnerable to being excluded since early pregnancies often carry a stigma and force the mothers to drop out of school or to discontinue work if adequate and affordable child care is not available.

58. In some countries, population ageing is already causing a shrinking of the workforce. Where Governments struggle with adequate provisions for an ageing population, in terms of income support and long-term care, families must take up the burden of providing care for the elderly. Such changes may negatively affect intergenerational solidarity, with potentially negative impacts on inclusion.

59. Armed conflict, violence, civil unrest and new forms of violence, including terrorism, are on the rise and capture the international agenda. Social integration has been hampered by conflicts centred around matters of local autonomy, ethnic identity and competition for resources. Rising crime and trafficking in women, children and migrants pose increasing challenges to social integration as well.

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[18] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (www.uis.unesco.org).

[19] International Labour Organization, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market* (Geneva, 2006).

III. The importance of social integration for poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all

A. Poverty as a form of exclusion

60. Poverty is often associated with the lack of social integration while poverty reduction and decent work are often seen as pathways to social integration and greater inclusion. Poverty can be both the cause and consequence of social exclusion and the very concept of social exclusion helps us understand the nature of poverty, identify its causes and enhance social policy aimed at poverty reduction.

61. There is a growing recognition that poverty can be regarded as a particular form of social exclusion or an accumulation of different forms of exclusion. Poverty is manifested by limited participation in all forms of decision-making and in inadequate access to income, productive employment, education, health services, housing, public services, culture and recourse to justice. In this regard, gender-related exclusion and inequality, such as exclusion of women from basic education, land ownership, credit markets and employment, is of particular significance.

62. Beyond lack of access to economic resources, poverty and exclusion stem from a lack of political and social entitlements making participation in society difficult or impossible. Those experiencing chronic poverty are effectively excluded from political representation and voice. They often are locked into exploitative power relations that deepen their exclusion.

63. A first step towards social integration of people living in poverty consists of meeting their basic human needs, including nutrition, health, water and sanitation, housing and access to education and employment. So long as basic needs go unfulfilled, social integration cannot move forward. At the same time, it is necessary to empower people living in poverty by involving them in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of programmes for poverty eradication. Such programmes should respect the dignity and culture of people living in poverty, use their skills, knowledge and creativity and assist them in getting organized and educated about their rights.

64. From a social integration perspective, poverty can be characterized as a lack or loss of social connections and engagement with formal social and economic networks and institutions. An important dimension of poverty-reduction interventions, therefore, lies in preventing the process of impoverishment that leads to social exclusion.

B. Employment and decent work

65. As regional experience indicates, the labour market is often the weakest link between excluded individuals and groups and the mainstream of society. Casualization and informalization of employment, with less security and stability in professional and personal life, increase vulnerability and deepen social exclusion. The unemployed not only lose their income and social benefits entitlements but may also experience disruptions in their participation in the life of the community and family life.

66. Exclusion from employment owing to racial discrimination persists in many countries. People from marginalized groups have fewer opportunities to obtain the skills necessary for well-paid jobs. Moreover, employers often discriminate against them in hiring and advancement. Discrimination in hiring against members of marginalized groups deepens their exclusion and prevents them from fully contributing to society. It also has a negative impact on efficiency, productivity and growth.

67. Young people have unemployment rates two to three times higher than those of adults. They face higher barriers to employment owing to prevailing stereotypes about their suitability combined with limited work experience and skills. Exclusion and neglect can push young people to engage in crime and illegal activities and thus disengage from the life of the community.

68. There is ample evidence that high unemployment leads to ethnic tensions and fuels resentment against immigrants while deepening gender divisions. Thus unemployment may feed into the so-called "politics of intolerance and racism", causing greater exclusion of migrants and deepening societal divisions.

69. Migrants are typically vulnerable to exclusion and poverty, especially when relegated to low-skilled and low-paying jobs. Their integration into the society is linked to their successful acquisition of status, roles and rights in a country of immigration. It is also linked to the recognition of their current skills and qualifications. Too often, the skills acquired in the country of origin are unrecognized in the host country. Migrants are then required to do menial jobs. Recognition of skills across borders should be a priority in a socially inclusive society as it relates to the use of one's capabilities to fully contribute to society.

70. Equality of opportunity is of special relevance to employment and social integration. It requires enforcement of core labour standards and non-discrimination in access to employment, including the provision of reasonable accommodation, as well as ensuring access to training and skills upgrading.

71. Employment promotion is a socially integrative strategy in many countries and regions. Labour policies promoting social inclusion are based on non-discrimination in employment, equality of treatment, provision of education and training or retraining and the inclusion in labour markets of groups at risk of discrimination, such as youth, older persons, women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and migrants. Unemployed, displaced workers in need of retraining should be especially targeted.

72. Lack of opportunities for decent work makes it difficult for people to be fully integrated into a society. To counteract the challenges faced by workers, including deteriorating conditions of work and lack of rights, representation and voice at work, as well as inadequate protection in the face of disability, old age or illness, it is believed that the growing focus on decent work with its tenets of employment, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection offers better prospects for social integration.

IV. Existing strategies aimed at promoting social integration

73. People can realize inclusion in keeping with the standards of the society they live in, thanks to their own efforts and by means of support from family, the local

community and State, private and civil society institutions. Such support, however, is often inadequate or non-existent, leaving individuals and groups excluded. It is vital, then, to establish what assistance is needed both for the general population and specific groups that are vulnerable to exclusion.

74. The World Summit for Social Development provided a framework for developing, shaping and implementing socially inclusive policies. Following the Summit, Governments adopted many policies and programmes to counteract the socio-economic trends negatively affecting social integration. The focus of those policies and the approaches cover a broad range including the promotion of social justice and equality, non-discrimination and minority rights, cultural diversity and multicultural education; the adoption of rights-based or group-specific approaches; redistributive policies; and the development of social protection. The practical implementation of such policies, however, has been slow and their promise remains unfulfilled for countless excluded and marginalized people.

A. Social justice, equality, non-discrimination and multicultural education

75. Social justice relates to the principles, values and institutions that must be in place in any given society so that all of its members fulfil their responsibilities towards that society and share in the benefits produced by it. To advance equity and equality of opportunity, anti-discrimination measures need to be taken. Purely legislative measures do not seem to be sufficient in this respect, as the creation of an inclusive society presupposes respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

76. The principles of economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights enshrined in universal human rights are one of the cornerstones of socially inclusive societies. They form a basis for articulating demands and mobilizing action for the fulfilment of human rights.

77. Creating socially inclusive societies also requires that tolerance, mutual respect and the value of diversity be actively promoted through educational curricula starting in elementary schools. Multicultural education has been promoted in several countries to advance respect for cultural difference and do away with prejudice and racial stereotypes. Another useful approach is the promotion of "cultural democracy" which creates space — opportunities and institutions — for marginalized cultures to bring their own contribution to the society at large.

B. Group-specific mandates

78. Working towards inclusion requires clear recognition of specific obstacles faced by different groups in society, particularly those groups that tend to be prone to exclusion such as older people, youth and people with disabilities.

79. A society for all is a society for all ages. Group-specific mandates, such as the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, aim at social integration of the young and the old, respectively, in the mainstream of society.

80. The World Programme of Action for Youth and several regional frameworks, such as the African Youth Charter, the European Youth Pact and the Iberoamerican Convention on Youth Rights, have been instrumental in guiding the formulation and implementation of national youth policies. Nevertheless, they do not provide guidelines to assess the progress made towards achieving the broad goals they outlined. The Secretariat has therefore been tasked to develop concrete benchmarks in the form of specific goals and time-bound targets, which may provide better means to assess national progress.

81. The World Programme of Action for Youth identifies several priority areas and parallel fields of action to address the most pressing concerns faced by young people today. Those seen as essential for fostering the social integration of young people include improved levels of basic education, skill training and literacy, employment creation, the full and effective participation of young people in the life of society and in decision-making.

82. Urgent action is required to ensure the continuing integration and empowerment of older people in rapidly ageing societies. According to the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, done in 2007-2008, major policy efforts by States focused on the provision of pensions, extending health-care benefits to older persons, adjusting labour markets and care systems to correspond to accelerated demographic ageing, preventing discrimination against and abuse of older persons, and establishing intergenerational solidarity programmes.

83. The achievements in better integrating older persons into all aspects of societal life are encouraging. However, many obstacles remain, including insufficient participation of older persons in the political, economic, social and cultural domains and limited possibilities for them to pursue education and training.

84. The social inclusion and advancement of persons with disabilities rests on recognition of the fact that persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group and that it is the responsibility of the society to reduce environmental and cultural barriers to their participation in all aspects of society on an equal basis with others.

85. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[20] clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made to enable them to effectively exercise their rights as well as areas where the protection of rights must be reinforced.

86. While indigenous peoples come from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, they share a life of economic and social marginalization with limited access to basic health care and education. They often live in abject poverty and are subject to human rights violations. In many countries, the situation of indigenous peoples stems from the institutionalization of discriminatory practices over a prolonged period of time. Such policies have resulted in the outright exclusion of indigenous peoples from society, or their inclusion under inferior conditions resulting from differential and less beneficial treatment.

87. Many attempts were made in the past to assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant society which resulted in a loss of indigenous culture and identity. It has since become apparent that forced assimilation or forced integration of indigenous

[20] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

peoples fails to provide them with opportunities and benefits on a par with the rest of society. Such practices have been detrimental not only to indigenous peoples themselves, but to national growth, social cohesion and political stability.

88. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues emphasizes the importance of a human rights-based and culturally sensitive approach to indigenous people's issues. Socially inclusive policies for indigenous peoples should be based on respect for their world-views, perspectives and experiences, as well as their concepts of well-being and development. Such policies should address the structural causes of exclusion, recognize indigenous peoples' group and individual rights and focus on developing respect and accommodating cultural diversity while creating the conditions for indigenous peoples' full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

89. The needs of specific groups must be addressed without stigmatizing them or overemphasizing their particular predicament, which could reinforce the fault lines in a society. Sometimes directing resources at disadvantaged groups can exacerbate social discrimination and hamper efforts to gain political support.

C. Participation in decision-making

90. Social integration requires promoting ideals, processes and institutions that enable all members of a society to participate fully in its social, political and economic life. Such participation must be based on equality of rights and opportunities.

91. Participation in social life and networks gives people access to information, opportunities and support, helps them to escape isolation and gain a sense of belonging and empowerment, and tends to protect them from marginalization. It is important that all groups in society be made aware of the causes of poverty and stigmatization so as to create an all-encompassing sense of social solidarity.

92. It is impossible to achieve social inclusion without a high degree of political inclusion. Political inclusion presupposes democratic participation, ensuring that all citizens can play a role in society and can influence policy design, implementation and monitoring.

93. It is, therefore, vital to involve all stakeholders in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions that determine the functioning and well-being of societies. Through political participation, people secure a place in society, from which they can influence the policy design and outcomes. They should be able to influence decisions that have an impact on their lives. In this regard, it is critical to collect and make publicly available data and information that enable people to make informed decisions.

D. Redistributive policies, including social protection

94. For socially inclusive policies to take hold, society must be bound by a social contract, a willingness to support others in times of need. Financial solidarity mechanisms, including progressive taxation, are one of the ways to promote social integration. At the World Social Summit, Governments recognized that social integration required the protection of the weak and that social protection

programmes should promote independence, facilitate the reintegration of people excluded from economic activity and prevent social isolation or stigmatization.

95. There is a growing body of evidence in support of the idea that social protection can be effective as a preventive measure, reducing risks and vulnerabilities and have a great impact on development efforts. Social protection is also an effective tool for addressing both the causes and symptoms of vulnerability and long-lasting inequalities and thus facilitating the building of inclusive societies.

96. Well-designed social protection programmes significantly reduce poverty. In Europe, it is estimated that social transfers reduce the risk of poverty among children by 44 per cent on average.[21] Similarly, in South Africa, the child support grant established in 1998 has become an important poverty-alleviating instrument which has helped millions who take care of children, particularly single mothers who are among the most discriminated members of society.

97. In Brazil, the conditional cash transfer programme Bolsa Familia has succeeded in reaching a large number of the country's socially excluded families and improving their income while securing children's access to basic health care and education. To apply for Bolsa Familia benefits, many people had to acquire documents such as birth certificates or identity cards for the first time. In doing so, they developed awareness of belonging to a larger society than their immediate community, creating a sense of citizenship with its rights and obligations.

98. The experience of countries that have implemented basic, non-contributory social pension schemes for older people points to a significant positive spillover effect across all ages. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa and Brazil indicate that pensions are often invested in nutrition and education for children. Further evidence suggests that regular cash transfers enabled families to shift from subsistence agriculture to sustainable household production.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

99. Socially inclusive societies rally around common objectives and move beyond narrow group interests. However, the most vulnerable in society may not belong to any particular group that could represent their interests and the poorest are not always a homogenous group. That is why working to promote inclusion is an undertaking for the whole of society. It requires a clear analysis of the current situation and the participation of all stakeholders in needs assessment, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes.

100. Advancing social integration also requires political leadership and commitment. National strategies for promoting growth and equity through macroeconomic stability and sound public finances, accompanied by fair and progressive tax systems and social protection mechanisms, are vital in this respect. The task of social integration is not the responsibility of Governments alone but should be shared by all sectors of the economy and society at large, including the

[21] Council of the European Union, "Joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2008", Brussels, 4 March 2008 (document 7274/08).

private sector and civil society organizations. However, it is the responsibility of Governments to set up institutional arrangements that facilitate such involvement at the national and local levels.

101. Ultimately, the successful implementation of socially inclusive strategies will depend on the extent to which individuals and groups are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and Governments are accountable and committed to social justice. That is why measures to strengthen participatory democracy, including mobilizing public opinion and engaging civil society organizations, are crucial for fostering social cohesion.

102. Social policies should be transformative so as to enable the socially excluded and the marginalized to be integrated in society and to break intergenerational poverty and exclusion. Access to social services, especially health and education, is an area where good strategies can be "transformative" in the longer run by closing the gaps in education and health outcomes felt by marginalized groups.

103. The persistence of social exclusion impedes poverty reduction, economic growth and social development and overall social and economic progress. That is why social inclusion must become a high priority for the international community, Governments, civil society and all groups and individuals who have a stake in the social development process. Peace and stability within society and among States may well depend on the success of socially inclusive policies that Member States pursue.

B. Recommendations

National level

104. **Governments should develop socially inclusive policies and mainstream them into national development and poverty reduction strategies. Such policies should be based on respect for diversity and a ban on forced assimilation. To achieve that, Governments may consider establishing an institutional focal point tasked with promoting and monitoring social integration.**

105. **Governments should consider promoting full employment and decent work as central instruments for social and economic inclusion and poverty reduction, with particular attention to socially and economically marginalized groups. Governments should design and implement comprehensive cross-sectoral social policies, including basic social protection schemes for both the formal and informal economies, as instruments to achieve equity, inclusion, stability and cohesion in their societies.**

106. **Governments should actively pursue policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status and remove all discriminatory provisions from their national legal frameworks.**

107. **Governments should address barriers to participation and promote the creation of consultative mechanisms that provide opportunities for socially excluded groups, including women, minorities and other marginalized groups, to be heard regarding their needs and aspirations, applying the requirements of relevant international instruments.**

108. **To ensure that results are obtained, special efforts should be made by Governments and society at large to establish evaluation frameworks for social inclusion policies, drawing on indicators that measure outcomes and impact, rather than just inputs and outputs.**

International level

109. **The international community and donor Governments should pay particular attention to the needs of fragile societies, including those emerging from conflict, as well as subregions at risk, in order to promote peacebuilding, social cohesion and constructive community relationships geared at preventing and mitigating violent conflicts.**

110. **Regional intergovernmental entities are invited to facilitate the exchange of good policies and practices aimed at achieving equity, inclusion and cohesion. The establishment of a regionally appropriate "social floor" minimum standard and an overall portability of basic entitlements across borders may be considered.**

111. **The international community may reflect on the current group-specific mandates in order to identify the links and areas of convergence between them. The commonalities found in approaches to different vulnerable groups could form a basis for more effective implementation of those mandates.**

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Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/17, in which the Council decided to give prominence to, and raise awareness of, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In its resolution, the Council requested the Commission for Social Development to discuss regional programmes that promoted social development through the sharing of experiences and best practices. The present report emphasizes the need to address the social dimensions of NEPAD plans of action in such areas as governance, agricultural development, infrastructure development, health and education. The report also highlights the importance of social inclusion, social protection, global partnerships and the need to strengthen data in respect of the social dimensions of NEPAD. It concludes with a set of recommendations that underscore the importance of elevating and championing Africa's social development agenda.

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I. Introduction

1. Africa has made considerable progress in a number of social development areas. The first half of the timetable for attaining the Millennium Development Goals recorded concrete gains in such areas as primary school enrolment, measles vaccination, the use of insecticide-treated bednets, as well as reductions in HIV infection rates in some countries. Progress in those areas is likely to be further consolidated if the social development dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) receive a high level of political commitment and the needed resources from Africa's leaders and their development partners. The importance of these commitments was recently reinforced during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the theme "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward" and during the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, which were held on 22 and 25 September 2008.

2. Overall progress, however, has been slow in a majority of sub-Saharan African countries and the economic and social development of Africa remains a daunting challenge. The slow pace of socio-economic development in Africa is also magnifying the potentially ruinous impact on Africa of the current global food and energy crises and the global financial meltdown. Falling or suppressed wages and heightened inequality, which have been wrought by globalization, further compound the situation. The crises are likely to have very corrosive and debilitating effects on the fight against extreme poverty and hunger and on efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to secure peace on the continent.

3. In order to be able to address the crises head on, Africa's own development programme blueprint, the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development, should have a strong focus on boosting economic growth and should comprehensively address a number of social development issues. A focus on social development issues will not only complement growth but will also improve the lives of ordinary men, women and children across the continent, irrespective of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, social or other status. The issues include combating poverty and hunger, creating full employment and decent work opportunities for all, improving access to education and health-care services, promoting gender equality and social inclusion and putting in place social protection systems that address poverty, vulnerability and risk shocks. The issues are at the core of the social policy framework for Africa and the Windhoek declaration on social development, which were adopted at the conclusion of the first African Union conference of African ministers in charge of social development, held in Windhoek in October 2008.

4. In order to increase social spending for health, education and social protection and to generate the necessary revenue for financing public works projects that create jobs, African economies will have to increase the pace at which they accumulate wealth. This involves high and sustained economic growth rates since only cumulative increases in long-term growth will make African countries richer. Estimates have shown that if a country's economy grows at a rate of 1 per cent per year, it will take 69 years for that country to double its per capita income. In contrast, a country growing at a rate of 5 per cent per year will take about 14 years to double its per capita income. It is encouraging, therefore, to note that since the mid-1990s, many African economies have been able to increase their growth rates.

In 2007, Africa's real growth rate averaged 5.8 per cent, up from 5.7 per cent in 2006, 5.3 per cent in 2005 and 5.2 per cent in 2004.[1] African countries will therefore need to sustain high rates of growth in order to improve their chances of eradicating poverty on the continent.

5. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in July 2001, provides a vision and strategic framework for Africa's socio-economic and political development. It places the onus of the continent's development on Africans themselves. Specifically, NEPAD aims to place African countries on a path of sustainable growth and development in order to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process; accelerate the empowerment of women; achieve and sustain strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth (over 7 per cent per year); and ensure that all African countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Addressing the primary goals contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome is fundamental to Africa's socio-economic development, in particular those relating to poverty eradication, job growth and fostering social cohesion. In addition, social and regional inequalities will be reduced by investing in education and health and other physical infrastructure. The social dimensions of NEPAD should therefore be guided by the principles of equal opportunity and fairness, enhancing the quality of life and well-being of all Africans and putting people at the centre of national development.

7. The present report examines the social dimensions of NEPAD and identifies actions that, if implemented, would maximize positive results, while minimizing negative ones.

II. Africa's social development needs and challenges

8. Africa's social development needs and challenges span a number of areas, including the three critical areas of poverty eradication, employment creation and social inclusion, which comprise the focus of the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the recently adopted African Union social policy framework for Africa. The African Union has also identified a number of other critical issues, including health and education, women, youth employment, social protection systems, ageing, the family, migration and mainstreaming disability in the continent's development agenda. While some of the issues are set out in the Millennium Development Goals, others are articulated in the internationally agreed development goals, including in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

9. The African Union Commission has adopted a series of measures that are designed to mainstream sound and sustainable social development in all development policies, including poverty reduction strategies. In particular, the African Union organized the first African Union Conference of African ministers in charge of social development, held in Windhoek in October 2008. The main

[1] Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2008: Africa and the Monterrey Consensus: Tracking Performance and Progress* (Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa, 2008).

objectives of the conference included adopting a social policy framework for Africa and reviewing and assessing progress made by countries in implementing the various instruments in the area of social development; identifying gaps, constraints and best practices; forging partnerships with development partners and civil society organizations; popularizing the various existing African Union instruments on social issues; and promoting the rights and welfare of the most vulnerable members of society.

10. The need to highlight these areas has occurred against a backdrop of a global economic expansion that has failed to raise most African incomes above one dollar a day. Current World Bank poverty estimates show that the number of people living below the new poverty line of $1.25 in sub-Saharan Africa has almost doubled, from 200 million in 1981 to 380 million in 2005.[2] Africa also continues to face a major disease burden, which is primarily being driven by HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Africa is home to 75 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS, while 90 per cent of all malaria deaths occur in Africa. Tuberculosis kills half a million Africans each year, mostly young men and women in their most productive years. African women are still several hundred times more likely to die as a result of maternity complications than those in developed countries. In addition, gender disparities in education are still evident in several countries.

11. The increased prospect of a global recession is likely to make the future outlook even worse. A significant impact in Africa of the global economic slowdown is likely to be a rise in unemployment in the formal sector, owing to a disruption in foreign direct investment flows. Decreased western consumer demand is likely to have an impact on African economies, including on countries that export products through such trade agreements as the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

12. Fortunately, falling oil prices have relieved concerns about the impact of high energy prices on the poor, particularly access of the poor to cheap and affordable food imports. For most poor countries that are net food importers, the decline in oil prices will help reduce inflationary pressures. However, for oil-exporting countries, a downtrend in energy prices will have a significant impact on their national budgets. In the past, some oil-exporting African countries had managed to improve their socio-economic profiles as a result of billions of dollars in revenues from oil exports: investments geared towards building new or improving existing infrastructure such as roads, clinics, hospitals and schools had shot up and concerted efforts were under way to use those resources to aggressively reduce the depth and severity of poverty and hunger. For other commodity-exporting countries, revenues from such commodities as gold, copper and timber, which had become the foundation for their leap forward, are currently shrinking as a result of the global economic slowdown. Consequently, many commodity-dependent African countries are likely to see declines in rates of economic growth and social progress.

13. Various NEPAD programmes allow countries to address poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. For instance, NEPAD programmes address such issues as lack of participation in governance by all segments of society, including the poor and marginalized; material deprivation (food consumption, safe and adequate clean water supply); acute vulnerability to external shocks as a result of

[2] Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion, "The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty", *Policy Research Working Paper*, No. WPS 4703 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2008).

disease, economic crises or natural disasters; and low or inadequate human capital formation (education and health). Thus, NEPAD is Africa's framework for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, through investments in peace and security, building and fostering good governance and democracy, supporting and increasing investments in sectoral policies and mobilizing international support for implementation. Its social dimensions should therefore address the process leading to the attainment of its broad objectives. For instance, promoting community participation and listening to the voices of the poor and marginalized should be part of the process of designing and implementing NEPAD programmes and policies at local levels.

14. Fulfilling those objectives will demonstrate that NEPAD places a high premium not just on economic development and governance but also on social development. The emphasis on good governance and sustainable growth and development is crucially important if African countries are to be able to raise, invest and distribute the financial resources necessary to meet the social dimensions of development. In order to deal effectively with the social dimensions of NEPAD, therefore, countries need to realize that the overarching goal of development and good governance is to improve the lives of ordinary people and to broaden and galvanize the opportunities they have to make their lives better.

15. In order to achieve the objectives, African countries will need to raise the profile of, and delivery on, the social dimensions of NEPAD, as articulated in the African Union social policy framework for Africa. As Africa harvests and markets its commodities, it must bear in mind that the harvesting of its natural resources and the development of related infrastructure must take into consideration the social dimensions of development. African societies should also strive to meet their current needs without adversely affecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. NEPAD should strengthen its focus on people-centred development. Its social dimensions should continue to emphasize universally shared development objectives, such as those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and the advancement of democracy by, for instance, increasing the number of countries subscribing to the African Peer Review Mechanism. Addressing the social dimensions of NEPAD will also strengthen the efforts of countries that are working hard to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

16. Africa's commitment to implementing the goals contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in particular those relating to poverty eradication, was further strengthened when the African Union organized an extraordinary summit on employment and poverty alleviation, held in Ouagadougou in September 2004. The summit adopted a declaration, plan of action and follow-up mechanism that committed member States to placing employment at the centre of development strategies.[3] In particular, the summit endorsed an 11-point action plan to reverse the current trends of pervasive and persistent poverty, unemployment and under-employment in the continent (see box 1).

[3] See African Union documents on the declaration on employment and poverty alleviation in Africa (EXT/ASSEMBLY/AU/3(III)); plan of action for the promotion of employment and poverty alleviation (EXT/ASSEMBLY/AU/4(III)); and follow-up mechanism for implementation, monitoring and evaluation (EXT/ASSEMBLY/AU/5(III)).

Box 1

Priority areas of action outlined in the Ouagadougou plan of action on employment and poverty alleviation[a]

- Ensuring political leadership and commitment to creating an enabling environment of good governance for investment, development and poverty alleviation in the context of NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals
- Promotion of the agricultural sector and rural development, sustainable management of the environment for food security and development of support infrastructure
- Development of an appropriate framework for integration and harmonization of economic and social policies
- Improving and strengthening the existing social protection schemes and extending it to workers and their families currently excluded, as well as occupational safety, health and hygiene
- Empowerment of women by integrating them in the labour markets and to enable them to participate effectively in the development of poverty reduction strategies, policies and programmes
- Human and institutional capacity-building for public and private institutions in charge of employment promotion and poverty alleviation, including social partners and other relevant actors of civil society
- Utilizing key sectors with high employment potential to generate more jobs and allocate adequate resources for that purpose
- Building international cooperation, fair and equitable globalization and partnerships for an enhanced international support for Africa's efforts towards achieving sustainable development, putting emphasis on the employment agenda, poverty alleviation, regional integration and a better participation in the globalization process
- Promoting regional and economic cooperation among the regional economic communities in order to expand economic space, intra- and interregional trade, markets and exploit the economies of scale
- Targeting and empowering vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, aged persons, migrants, children and people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases, internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants and the working poor
- Mobilization of resources at national, regional and international levels

[a] See biennial report of the African Union on follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the Ouagadougou extraordinary summit (LSC/Exp/5(VI)).

III. Plans of action of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and their social dimensions

A. Good governance

17. Human development performance indicators suggest that actions taken by some African Governments have had a detrimental impact on the living conditions of their citizens. Some countries have been characterized by low levels of democracy, excessive centralization of power, institutionalized corruption and lack of adequate human rights protection, which in many cases have severely undermined the prospects for economic growth, social development and political stability.

18. Good governance is fundamental to the success of NEPAD. NEPAD is premised on the new political will of African leaders and points out that earlier attempts at continent-wide development programmes have failed as a result of questionable leadership, among other problems. Currently, the situation has changed and it is much more hopeful than it has been in the past. Democracy is spreading across the continent and the number of democratically elected leaders is on the rise. NEPAD recognizes the importance of good governance and includes initiatives on democracy and political governance and on economic and corporate governance.

19. Through NEPAD, African leaders acknowledge that good governance is essential to achieving sustainable development in Africa and pledge to promote good governance throughout the continent. The commitment has been reaffirmed on several occasions since the adoption of NEPAD, including through the 2002 Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance; the 2003 African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which came into force in 2004; and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

20. The commitment of African States has been implemented through the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary self-monitoring mechanism to ensure that the policies and practices of participating States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards. To date, 29 countries have acceded to the Mechanism, 14 have established national self-assessment structures and 7 have been peer-reviewed (Algeria, Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda).

21. The African Peer Review Mechanism demonstrates the willingness of African leaders to move from the commitment stage to the implementation stage with NEPAD good governance initiatives. However, some limitations still exist. The recommendations that come out of the peer review exercise must be acted upon in order for the process to be effective; however, the good governance capacity and political will that is required to implement recommended changes may be lacking. A stronger connection with and awareness by citizens and civil society would strengthen the Mechanism by increasing the accountability of those key constituents.

22. Democracy and good governance are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are a means towards strengthening the rule of law and human rights, minimizing potential conflict situations and creating an enabling environment for the pursuit of social development policies that can address the needs of all members of society and

ensure their participation in economic, social, cultural and political life. In other words, good governance and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Hence, the NEPAD governance programme, including the African Peer Review Mechanism, can and should promote social development causes and priorities by ensuring that strong and transparent institutions of governance adequately serve both the public and private good. This will promote pro-poor growth, poverty eradication and the participation and civic engagement of the poor. In addition, good governance will improve the international competitiveness of African businesses by attracting investments and strengthening policies that promote economic growth, employment creation and social inclusion.

23. Strong institutions enhance the ability of economic policies to attract and foster private-sector investment and job growth. By putting in place predictable rules and securing land and property rights, strong and transparent institutions can nurture the development, growth and competitive edge of micro, small and medium-size enterprises and transform them into the main drivers of socio-economic growth on the continent. These enterprises make significant contributions to social and economic development, irrespective of whether they operate in the formal or informal sectors of the economy. They constitute the largest number of business establishments in a majority of African countries.

B. Agricultural development

24. Close to 470 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live in rural areas, 65 per cent of whom work in agriculture.[4] Agriculture and household food security are therefore critical drivers of Africa's development prospects, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

25. In order to give greater attention to agriculture, food security and nutrition, the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. At its core, the framework aims to address the chronic food production gap and hunger crisis in Africa. It notes that agricultural development can play a special role in combating poverty; improving the continent's human development indicators, in particular those relating to children and women; increasing rural incomes; and advancing the goal of full employment and decent work for all in Africa. Because of its labour-intensive nature, agriculture has a tremendous potential to not only absorb large numbers of people but also to improve the quality of life of the rural population by boosting rural incomes and diet.

26. Despite its promise and the key role that it could play in development, however, African agriculture has been neglected over the last two and a half decades. A number of factors are at the root of this neglect. First, many African countries continue to devote only about 4 per cent of total public spending to agriculture instead of the 10 per cent that was called for by the 2003 Maputo Declaration on agriculture and food security in Africa. Second, official development assistance (ODA) directed at the agricultural sector has been declining since the 1980s. It is estimated that ODA

[4] World Bank, *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2007).

devoted to productive investments in agriculture in Africa rose from $1.2 billion in 1975 to about $3.2 billion in the 1980s and has since declined to about $1.2 billion.[4]

27. The neglect has had a debilitating impact on the lives of the rural and urban poor. Thousands of children across Africa are losing their learning potential as a result of stunted physical and intellectual growth. These developments have also led to social and political unrest in some countries. The problems are likely to worsen as a result of recent spikes in food and energy prices. The World Bank estimates that close to 100 million people could be pushed back into extreme poverty, while the number of malnourished would increase by 44 million to reach a total of 967 million worldwide as a result of the global food and energy crises.

28. To reverse these trends, African countries need to significantly scale up investments in agriculture as called for by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, as well as launch a green revolution in Africa. Recent actions by the World Bank to double agricultural lending to sub-Saharan Africa over the next year to $800 million and $50 million in commitments from the newly established multi-donor trust fund of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme should help to improve crop productivity.

29. However, a substantial increase in resources is required to fill the other significant gaps in African agriculture and rural development that are holding back the continent from being a major agricultural producer in the world. First among these is the need for African countries to increase the share of their national budgets allocated to agriculture, in particular meeting the 10 per cent budget allocation to agriculture by 2008 as agreed under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.[5] According to the African Union, only six countries have reached the 10 per cent target of public expenditure on agriculture. Second, African Governments will need to invest more in rural areas where more than 65 per cent of the population lives. In addition, in order to increase agricultural productivity, Governments and their development partners should consider investing in appropriate agricultural technologies, education, rural infrastructure and rural institutions, as well as address land tenure issues, taking into account the situation of such marginalized populations as pastoralists. If African farmers are given the opportunity to learn appropriate water harvesting and farming techniques, and have access to subsidized fertilizers and seeds, as well as genuine national and developed market access to their agricultural products, they will be able to guarantee their own food security and lift themselves out of poverty.

C. Infrastructure development

30. Investing in infrastructure has positive social development spin-offs. Besides bolstering rural-urban and regional connectivity, which is essential for the movement of goods and services and the development of domestic markets, investing in NEPAD infrastructure programmes will also improve access to roads, schools, health-care services and water and sanitations services for all sectors of society, especially the poor, women and marginalized groups who often live in inaccessible areas. More importantly, infrastructure developments have tremendous potential to improve productivity, fight unemployment and raise the standard of

[5] See decision EX.CL/Dec.431 (XIII) of the Executive Council of the African Union.

living. Downstream, investments in infrastructure will generate the development of small and medium-size enterprises, with an enormous potential to create jobs for unemployed women, youth and other socially excluded groups. The construction and maintenance of highways, roads, bridges, ports, dams and airports is labour intensive, in particular at a low-skill level. In addition, infrastructure development will help Africa to better leverage globalization to its benefit through trade facilitation and regional integration.

31. Infrastructure development also offers a great opportunity to mainstream gender and youth issues. Rural road rehabilitation and urban infrastructure repair projects all offer opportunities to bolster the participation of women and youth in the infrastructure labour market. Opportunities for business creation by women and youth can also be found in projects such as water and energy distribution and information and communications technology. These projects have the potential to create a significant number of new jobs. In order for these goals to be realized, however, men, women and youth will need literacy and skills training, access to credit and microfinance and a voice in project design and implementation. Governments will need to involve civil society organizations that have a strong presence in local communities and have the ability to mobilize women and young people.

32. Although there has been marked progress in implementing both the short-term action plan and the medium- to long-term strategic framework of the NEPAD infrastructure programme, implementing the infrastructure programme will require a substantial increase in investments from public-private partnerships, as well as aid from the donor community. The MDG Africa Steering Group estimates that $52.2 billion per year will be required in public and private investments to address the continent's infrastructure bottlenecks. This is a large amount of money, which, if properly channelled, can stimulate substantial job growth across the continent. The current global financial crisis, however, threatens to worsen aid volatility and undermine resource commitments to Africa.

D. Health and education

33. In order for African economies to grow and diversify their export base, African Governments will need to make a priority of their human capabilities. This will require investments that improve access to universal primary health-care services and primary and secondary education.

34. Health concerns remain a significant barrier to social development in the region. According to the recommendations of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group, in most African countries the basic health infrastructure needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals on child mortality, maternal health and infectious disease is lacking. As a result, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for about half of the deaths of children under 5 years of age in the developing world. Many countries in the region made no progress in reducing childhood deaths between 1990 and 2006.[6] It is, however, promising to note that significant progress has been made in the prevention of measles, a major cause of childhood deaths. The proportion of 12-23 month-olds receiving at least one dose of measles vaccine increased from 56 per cent in 1990 to 72 per cent in 2006 in sub-Saharan Africa.

[6] United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report, 2008* (New York: United Nations, 2008).

35. Very little progress has been made in reducing maternal deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1990, 920 maternal deaths occurred for every 100,000 live births. By 2005, that number had declined negligibly to 900, 100 times the rate of maternal death in developed regions. Improved reproductive health care, including skilled health workers at delivery and access to emergency obstetric care, is essential for reducing maternal deaths.

36. Social development has been further hampered by the high disease burden the continent bears resulting from HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases. The vast majority of those living with HIV/AIDS are in Africa. In 2007, 67 per cent of all those living with HIV/AIDS were in sub-Saharan Africa and the region accounted for 72 per cent of all AIDS deaths.[7] Tuberculosis is on the rise in the region. Between 1990 and 2006, the number of tuberculosis cases increased from 352 to 521 per 100,000 people (excluding people who were HIV positive).

37. With regard to education, several African countries are on track to achieve universal primary education. Primary education enrolment rates have increased from 54 per cent in 1991 to 71 per cent in 2006 in sub-Saharan Africa. The progress can be attributed in part to such important policy changes as free primary education, school feeding programmes and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative global partnership. Despite significant progress in the region, the total net enrolment ratio still remains well below the average of 88 per cent for all developing countries. The quality of education also needs to be improved. Only one quarter of children of secondary school age in sub-Saharan Africa are in secondary school; 34 per cent are enrolled in primary education.

38. In his report entitled "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward" (A/63/130), the Secretary-General highlighted important commitments in the health and education sectors made by African countries. African countries have pledged to increase health budgets to 15 per cent of public expenditure (according to the 2001 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases) and to increase education budgets to 20 per cent of public expenditure (according to the recommendations of the 2002 Dar-es-Salam Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States and Education for All Fast Track Initiative guidelines). Most African countries have established national mechanisms to coordinate the fight against HIV/AIDS, and 18 countries have implemented action plans to address the control of tuberculosis. With regard to malaria, African countries have committed to implementing the joint United Nations/World Bank Roll Back Malaria programme, launched in 1998. Clearly education is a key priority within the continent, reflected in the adoption of the two action plans on the first (1997-2006) and second (2006-2015) decades of education for Africa and the broad implementation of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative in the region.

39. Although many African countries are making notable progress in education, there is growing concern that some of the continent's best trained professionals will continue to leave for rich countries as a result of low wages and limited employment opportunities. While it can be argued that African countries subsidize the formation of skills that might be lost to the brain drain, it can also be argued that sending

[7] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *2008 Report on the Global Aids Epidemic* (Geneva: UNAIDS, 2008).

countries also obtain positive returns from the brain drain. Hence, efforts aimed at the better management of migration should include national efforts that focus on improving educational opportunities as well as commensurate increases in quality employment opportunities. Special efforts should be made to address the brain drain through improved opportunities for full employment and decent work for all. Improved opportunities for technical and vocational training and employment for young people should also be a top priority.

IV. Conclusions and the way forward

40. African countries should not look at social policy as welfare policy or as a residual system of safety nets that serve to mitigate and counteract Africa's chronic crop failures, macroeconomic policy failures, health epidemics, environmental disasters and other external shocks. Rather, they should look at social policy as an essential pillar of development in its own right and a productive investment. Such a view and broader perspective will ensure equitable and socially sustainable development and will allow countries to institute, for example, systems of social guarantees that deal with issues of access, quality of services, financial protection and participation.

A. Political commitment and public policy

41. African Governments should be firmly committed to promoting the social dimensions of NEPAD and should take specific steps and initiatives to use its programmes with that aim. At the country level, Governments will need to: improve or change what they produce and export by making serious commitments to invest in the skills and health of workers; create an enabling environment that attracts and allows private capital to grow; and foster a new spirit of entrepreneurship. Developed countries will also need to agree to a new set of trade rules that support the efforts of African countries.

42. In order to promote good governance, the African Peer Review Mechanism will need to have a stronger connection to two key constituencies: the citizens in whose name it is being undertaken, through outreach by Government, media and civil society; and the wider African and international community. The peer review exercise will also need to be followed up with concrete political actions. Greater awareness of the Mechanism and its process among both civil society and the private sector would foster greater public accountability and encourage Governments to deliver on promises and plans.

B. Social inclusion

43. In the area of social inclusion, NEPAD programmes should strive to foster a world where all social groups, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups, have access to productive assets, such as land and credit, educational opportunities, social protection, health-care services and political decision-making. These groups should also have access to markets that guarantee fair and just returns on their hard work and investments.

44. If NEPAD policies and programmes mainstream the objectives of social inclusion, as enunciated at the World Summit on Social Development and in the African common position on social integration, adopted at the first African Union conference of African ministers in charge of social development, Windhoek. African countries will strengthen the abilities of socially marginalized groups to improve the well-being of their children, families, communities and, ultimately, their countries. More importantly, policies that foster social inclusion have tremendous potential to maximize development efforts since they harness the abilities and resources of all citizens irrespective of their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, language or other status. Inclusive societies that are based on equality of lifetime opportunities and non-discrimination offer the best hope for a prosperous and peaceful Africa.

C. Social protection

45. Social protection measures, such as cash transfers and pensions, are critical to facilitating access by all social groups to adequate food and shelter, health, education and decent employment opportunities. The need for social protection systems that encompass those areas has been magnified by the recent food and energy crises and by the global financial meltdown, which have had a negative impact on the lives of such vulnerable groups as women, children, and the elderly. The impact of the crises underscores the need to strengthen existing national social protection systems and implement new ones where they do not exist, taking into account the unique circumstances that exist in each country.

46. New and increased public spending on social protection programmes will also help to blunt the corrosive effects of rising unemployment, poverty, inequality and vulnerability to climate change. As called for by the first African Union conference of African ministers in charge of social development, African countries should adopt and implement an African regional social policy framework, the goals of which would include employment, social protection, health, education, disaster prevention and mitigation. Social protection is also needed to allow for adequate protections in an era marked by increasing job insecurity and globalization. Extending coverage to all should be considered a priority when implementing NEPAD programmes, including national and international strategies to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and to create decent jobs for the rural and urban poor, women, youth and immigrants.

47. This can be done within the framework of a basic social protection floor. Such a social protection plan will give practical meaning to human, social, economic and political rights. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), it is feasible to put in place a floor consisting of: a basic old-age pension plan; child support grants that are conditional on school attendance; a minimum health-care package focused on the big killer diseases; basic skills development and labour intensive infrastructure programmes. The ILO estimates that in some African countries, a basic package of modest pensions and child benefits could reduce the poverty head count by 40 per cent, at a cost of 3-4 per cent of GDP.

D. Strengthening of data

48. In order to strengthen their capacity to manage the social dimensions of NEPAD, African countries must be able to measure the issues that they desire to

manage. African statistical systems will therefore need to be strengthened, as called for by the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, which aims to build the capacity of countries to manage results. There is a need to have a well developed framework for social statistics that will have, at its core, specific and well-defined social concerns that are of universal importance, such as population, health, education, employment status, housing, land ownership and core economic resources. In order to be effective, the framework should adhere to agreed international standards and have for each social concern an accompanying statistical data collection system that includes relevant concepts and definitions, recommended topics, defined periodicity and sources of data. Collected data would also need to be disaggregated by age, gender, and geographical levels.

E. Global partnerships

49. Although the global financial crisis endangers financing for development, it should not lead to a failure of countries to live up to the aid commitments they have already made. Existing commitments must be honoured. In particular, international cooperation, including the commitment of developed countries to target 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for ODA is essential for reaching NEPAD social development goals, the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. Failure to fulfil existing commitments might cause some countries to experience a backslide in terms of social development, human rights and the maintenance of peace and security. However, the implementation of NEPAD priorities should continue to be the primary responsibility of African Governments themselves. The private sector, civil society organizations and international development partners should augment those efforts. In particular, the international development community should collaborate and support Africa in implementing its social development agenda.

V. Recommendations

50. **The Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **In order to comprehensively address the social dimensions of NEPAD, the ministries or Government agencies dealing with social development issues should work closely with other relevant line ministries, particularly those dealing with education and health. The involvement of civil society organizations and the private sector in the design, implementation and evaluation of social development goals should also be a top priority;**

(b) **Social justice, equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all should be promoted and protected, including the democratic participation of marginalized groups;**

(c) **The creation of effective employment strategies should be promoted by placing full employment and decent work at the centre of economic policies, while extending appropriate skills development and education to displaced workers, persons with disabilities, women, youth and other marginalized groups;**

(d) African Governments, with support from the international community and the private sector, should take concrete actions to address the region's chronic poverty and hunger by launching an African green revolution within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme;

(e) African countries need to adopt and implement broad-based social protection policies to mitigate and counteract Africa's chronic crop failures, macroeconomic policy failures, health epidemics, environmental disasters and other external shocks;

(f) Social policies should address issues of social exclusion and vulnerability. A practical approach should be taken to expand basic social protection based on country-specific conditions, with the cooperation and participation of development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector;

(g) Empowerment of women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged groups, through access to productive resources, including land, credit, education, health care, clean water and sanitation and other social services, should be an integral part of comprehensive social policies;

(h) Education, employment opportunities and social protection should be expanded for youth. Such policies will mitigate the incidence of crime and substance abuse among young people and improve their self-esteem;

(i) African countries should honour commitments to improving health. They should live up to their pledge to increase health budgets to 15 per cent of public expenditure. The 2001 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases commits States to introduce a national strategy for tuberculosis. Countries that have not done so yet should develop national strategies for tuberculosis. To comply with commitments made through the 2000 Abuja Declaration and the Plan of Action on Roll Back Malaria and the recent African Union health strategy for 2007-2015, African countries should take action at the regional level to ensure implementation, monitoring and management of the Roll Back Malaria programme;

(j) Efforts to improve both enrolment and quality of education should be intensified. The creation of a skilled workforce and retention of capacity for development should also be a high priority;

(k) Africa's development partners should live up to the commitments they have made to international development cooperation to complement the efforts of African countries.

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Promoting full employment and decent work for all

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is prepared pursuant to the Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/18, in which the Council decided to keep full and productive employment and decent work for all under review and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-seventh session. Recognizing the critical role of rural employment in reducing poverty as well as in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the present report focuses on trends and key challenges in increasing employment and decent work in rural areas. It also highlights the potential implications of current global crises on employment and decent work. Hence, it examines the issue of social protection as an important instrument for reducing vulnerability, especially in the light of new challenges. The report concludes with a set of policy responses for promoting employment and decent work in rural areas.

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I. Introduction

1. The promotion of full employment and decent work for all, as one of the core issues of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, has been the priority theme for the 2007-2008 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development, discussed at its forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions. The outcome of the discussions held at those two sessions was Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/18, which reaffirmed the central importance of full and productive employment and decent work for poverty reduction and social integration. In that resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution both to the Commission at its current session and to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session as part of the report on the outcome of the implementation of the Social Summit and of the twenty-fourth special session of the Assembly. The significance of the resolution is that employment is now more firmly embedded in the work of the United Nations.

2. Given the short time between the adoption of the resolution and the preparation of the present report, a thematic approach was chosen to address two issues important for the implementation of the Social Summit, especially in the light of the current global crises: rural employment and social protection. Thus, the aim of the report is to examine the challenges and practical measures with respect to promoting productive rural employment and providing social protection. Reports of the Secretary-General on employment and decent work for all were submitted to the Commission for Social Development in 2007 (E/CN.5/2007/2) and 2008 (E/CN.5/2008/4), and to the Economic and Social Council in 2006 (E/2006/55); and a summary of the *Report on the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative* (A/62/168) was submitted to the General Assembly in 2007.

3. The topic of rural employment has been neglected in the development discourse over the past few decades and therefore the renewed attention to agricultural development and rural employment, against the backdrop of current global crises, especially the food crisis, is pivotal. It is also fundamental for making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, notably the goal of reducing poverty and hunger, because the majority of the working poor in developing countries live and work in rural areas.

4. It is clear that agricultural development and rural employment are of primary importance to the eradication of poverty, hunger and food insecurity. An estimated 75 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas of developing countries and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Agriculture provides jobs for about 1.3 billon smallholders and landless workers and is the largest and most important sector for female and youth employment.

5. However, most of these jobs are informal, poorly paid and seasonal. A large number of them also involve either self-employment, petty business or unpaid family workers. As a result, a significant number of rural people are among the working poor.

6. The United Nations system has responded to the increasing importance placed on rural development. Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction was

discussed at the International Labour Conference in late May and early June 2008.[1] It came out with a framework for action (ILC97-CPER-Conclusions-En.doc/v3), which laid out an integrated strategy to promote productive and decent employment in rural areas. The decent work agenda, which incorporates employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, provides a framework for addressing the multiple challenges of promoting rural employment for poverty reduction.

7. Furthermore, it should be recalled that the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[2] highlighted the need to expand and diversify sustained economic activity and productive employment in the rural sector by increasing productivity, encouraging investment in infrastructure, promoting mutually supportive improvements in rural farm and non-farm production and promoting social security schemes. Emphasis was given to investing in human resources development, encouraging self-employment, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises and assisting informal sectors and local enterprises to become more productive through access to credit, information, education and training. Those goals and policy measures have become important priorities of the United Nations development agenda.

8. Social protection, as one of the four pillars of the decent work agenda, is closely linked to full and productive employment. Social protection arises when decent work for all cannot be provided for various reasons ranging from economic crisis to ill health and other physical infirmity. However, it has wider implications. Firstly, social protection offers some income security to counter the impact of macroeconomic fluctuations. In that regard, it helps maintain aggregate demand and encourages growth by expanding domestic markets beneficial for employment generation. Secondly, social protection helps minimize vulnerability caused by structural and labour-market adjustments and contributes to the lessening of the social cost of structural change. Thirdly, social protection contributes to social inclusion by helping to bring the excluded and the poor into the mainstream of society. Lastly, social protection provision is simply a matter of survival for the poor, and it contributes to the reduction of inequality.

9. In that context, the present report focuses on the challenges, trends and approaches to increasing employment in the rural sector and considers the potential impact of the recent global financial, food and energy crises on employment and decent work for all. The report addresses social protection as an essential mechanism for reducing poverty and insecurity and promoting social integration and examines some key issues associated with extending social protection, taking into account the current challenges. Lastly, it presents some recommendations for promoting employment and decent work in rural areas.

II. Promoting rural employment

10. There is an urgent need to address the quality and quantity of employment opportunities in developing countries' rural areas in order to address poverty. Rural

[1] *Report IV: Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction*, International Labour Conference, ninety-seventh session, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2008.

[2] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

employment and agriculture in particular have enormous potential for poverty eradication, as three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas, with most earning their living from agriculture.[3] Large shares of rural populations tend to be associated with higher poverty rates. High levels of poverty persist, especially among landless agricultural wage labourers who have been uprooted from subsistence-oriented smallholdings by the introduction of cash and export crop production, and whose global share in the agricultural workforce is increasing.[4]

11. Important challenges to decent work in rural areas include low pay, informality, poor working conditions, inadequate social protection and lack of representation. Particular challenges include the prevalence of child labour and unequal treatment of women, youth and other vulnerable groups.

12. Women, youth and other vulnerable groups face particular challenges to obtaining decent work in rural areas. Rural youth are often disadvantaged relative to their urban counterparts in terms of educational opportunities, and that translates into fewer employment options. The lack of decent work in rural areas also leads to the migration to urban areas of significant numbers of youth seeking improved prospects for employment.[5] Women and children are also more likely to be contributing (unpaid) family workers, which is a highly precarious employment situation. Worldwide, women make up 41.8 per cent of the rural workforce, and they are twice as likely as men to be unpaid family workers.[1]

13. Declining investment in agriculture is one key challenge to promoting rural employment. Despite the historical importance of the rural sector as an engine of development, public spending in agriculture has plummeted across developing countries in recent years.[6] In Africa, public spending in agriculture fell from 6.4 per cent of total public spending in 1980 to 5 per cent in 2004. In Asia it fell from 14.8 to 7.4 per cent, and Latin America saw a decline of 66 per cent, from 8 to 2.7 per cent of total public spending in agriculture.[7]

14. These declines are largely attributable to structural adjustment policies implemented since the 1980s. There is a growing recognition that such policies, while initially intended to help rid developing countries of excessive debt and encourage free trade, are working against internationally agreed development goals. Given the considerable evidence of significant positive returns from Government investment in agriculture,[6] it is not surprising that Governments and donors are turning their attention to the agricultural sector after many years of neglect.

15. Increasing agricultural productivity through investment in infrastructure, research and development, agricultural extension programmes and increasing the accessibility of important farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizers are essential for improving the quality of all forms of rural employment, including off-farm

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[3] Ibid., p. 28.

[4] *Wage workers in agriculture: Conditions of employment and work* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2006).

[5] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007: Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.IV.1).

[6] Stephen Akroyd and Lawrence Smith, *Review of Public Spending to Agriculture: a joint DFID/World Bank Study* (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2007).

[7] *World of Work Report 2008, Income Inequalities in the Age of Financial Globalization* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, International Institute for Labour Studies, 2008).

employment. Employment-intensive infrastructure investment should also aim to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities to the likelihood of increased extreme weather events linked to global warming, through, for example, water management, flood defences and reforestation (or the prevention of deforestation).

16. Investing in rural people is also important. Human capital must be built inclusively by improving access to adequate health care and education for all rural people, including women, children and young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and other social groups, such as indigenous peoples and migrant workers, who suffer social exclusion. They need to be brought into the policy discussion and their needs addressed as they are integrated into the new rural development framework.

17. It is essential to create an inclusive, favourable economic and legal environment, including access to financing and macroeconomic policies that ensure stable economic conditions to encourage investment and are not biased against rural areas.

18. Official development assistance is important for developing countries to enhance public investments in human capital development in rural areas, as well as in rural infrastructure and agricultural research.

A. Current trends in rural employment and decent work

19. Agricultural employment occupies the greatest portion of the rural workforce. Over 1 billion people are employed in the agricultural sector worldwide. The agricultural sector is still the main employer in developing countries.[8] That is especially the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where, on average, more than 6 out of 10 people work in the agricultural sector. The share is also high in Asia, where around 5 out of 10 people work in agriculture. Agriculture accounts for 63 per cent of rural household income in Africa, 62 per cent in Asia, 50 per cent in Europe and 56 per cent in Latin America.[1]

20. However, the share of agriculture in total employment is declining. In 1991, 45.2 per cent of total employment was in agriculture. By 2007, the share had fallen to 34.9 per cent. That trend represents a shift towards services and industry, as well as growing urbanization and demographic changes in the rural workforce.[1]

21. Part of the shift is also due to a move towards non-farm activities in rural areas. In many countries, non-farm wage employment is growing at a faster rate than agricultural wage employment. For example, in Chile, non-farm employment rose from 25 per cent of total rural employment in 1960 to 49 per cent in 2002, and in Brazil from 14 to 31 per cent. In Bangladesh, non-farm rural employment increased at the rate of 0.7 per cent annually during the 1990s, while agricultural employment increased at an annual rate of 0.1 per cent.[8]

22. The share of non-farm workers in the rural labour force differs widely across developing regions. In Africa, it accounts for only about 10-20 per cent and takes the form of additional, mostly female employment during slow agricultural seasons.

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[8] *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2008).

There, subsistence-oriented agricultural employment is unable to generate the agricultural income necessary for rural non-farm diversification.

23. The situation is different in the case of market-oriented agriculture, which registers huge increases in rural non-farm activities. In Latin America, with its mainly export-oriented agriculture, the share of the non-farm labour force in the total rural labour force increased from 23.9 per cent in the 1970s to over 35 per cent in the 1990s. Even higher shares are typical for the domestic market-oriented agricultural economies in Asia, which have reached 30 to 40 per cent, with peaks of close to 50 per cent in East and South-East Asia. In China and India, which have more than half of the world's agricultural labour force, the share of non-farm employment is close to 25 per cent.[4]

24. Wages are often higher in the non-farm sector: For example, in Mexico, the average wage outside of agriculture is 56 per cent higher than in agriculture.[4] In most countries, non-farm activities account for 30 to 50 per cent of income in rural areas.

25. Therefore, non-farm employment, in combination with improved educational opportunities in rural areas, can be a gateway out of rural poverty. However, the lack of educated and skilled workers in rural areas is a limiting factor for the off-farm economy. According to a World Bank study,[4] most of the wage differential between on- and off-farm employment can be attributed to the fact that non-farm employment typically requires a higher skill level than agricultural work. Also, women are far less likely than men to be in non-farm wage employment in all regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, 2.4 per cent of women are in non-farm wage employment, as opposed to 8.6 per cent of men.[4]

26. There are other challenges to the expansion of non-farm wage employment. Most of the non-farm employment is in small businesses. Major constraints on the size of rural non-farm enterprises include the lack of access to credit and lack of infrastructure, including roads and reliable electricity. Weak governance and legal institutions also prevent enterprises from growing and employing more people. Active policy measures such as skill training, development of inclusive financial institutions, investment in rural infrastructure and institutional development are required to overcome such obstacles in order to promote rural employment by fostering the growth of non-farm small enterprises.

1. Rural employment and land distribution

27. In the agricultural sector, labour absorption is much lower on large farms than on smaller farms. Landownership patterns in countries with export-oriented agriculture favour concentration in large holdings and marginalization of smallholdings. That negatively affects opportunities for employment creation, and, as a result, significantly adds to the supply of labour entering the rural labour market.

28. Land distribution does not follow the rule of supply and demand. Land is limited, and its distribution follows political decisions. Agriculture is therefore not a sector in which market rules prevail without conditions. A combined strategy of subsistence and domestic market orientation appears to be more appropriate for mitigating rural/urban development disparities than either a subsistence or an export-oriented strategy alone.

Rural unemployment

29. The published data seriously underestimate the extent of unemployment in rural areas. In most developing countries, official rural unemployment figures are low and do not represent actual levels of high rural poverty.

30. Unemployment in rural areas takes the form of serious underemployment of either wage labourers or self-employed farmers. While full-time wage employment is set at 260 working days per year, agricultural wage labourers are estimated to work, on global average, only 170 days per year.[4]

31. Additionally, a large number of family labourers are disguised unemployed, meaning that they are in fact not needed, but are working to keep occupied. That is, their marginal product is zero and their removal from the family farm will not reduce output.

32. Underemployment and disguised unemployment coupled with low productivity often result in large-scale rural poverty. Thus, rural poverty can be considered the most effective indicator of actual rural unemployment.

Decent work deficit

33. There are several challenges to improving decent employment in the rural sector. Many of the challenges are related to factors fundamental to the sector, such as the low population density of rural areas and the distance to urban centres. Work in the agricultural sector is often informal. Informal workers are particularly vulnerable. They often lack contractual arrangements, which can lead to a lack of job security.

34. In addition, about half of the employment in developing countries is either own-account or contributing family work.[1] Such workers are often widespread in the rural sector. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO),[1] research on the microlevel has shown that unpaid family workers, who are usually women and children, are typically found in the agricultural sector, especially in developing countries.

35. Thus, many rural workers are likely to be outside the social protection and social safety nets that govern wage and salaried workers, and are therefore not likely to have social security, health or unemployment coverage.

36. Additionally, agricultural work tends to be insecure due to the seasonal nature of the work and the sensitivity to global markets in export-oriented cash crop production. It is also sensitive to climate concerns such as drought and flooding, which are exacerbated by climate change.

37. Work in agriculture can be more dangerous than work in other sectors. According to ILO, in several countries, the fatal accident rate in agriculture is double the average for all other industries (see: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/agriculture/brochure/english/agricult_e.pdf ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture). Workers are exposed to livestock-transmitted diseases and dangerous machinery. They often have little training or protective gear and clothing, increasing the risk of injury.

38. There is also a lack of labour regulation in rural areas. Where labour regulations do exist, enforcement is difficult, as much of rural work is casual or temporary in nature.

B. Improving rural infrastructure and resource management for employment creation

39. Investment in rural infrastructure is crucial for employment and growth. Such investment not only generates employment directly, it also bridges agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and the urban/rural divide. Transportation and communication technologies are an important link between rural producers and markets. Irrigation, electricity and transportation are lacking in many rural areas in developing countries. Opportunities exist to design and implement such infrastructure investments in order to maximize job creation and strengthen the resilience of communities to extreme weather events.

40. Natural resources are particularly important for rural populations whose livelihoods are tied to the condition of land and access to resources such as water, forests and aquaculture. Policies geared towards sustainable resource management are important for sustaining rural employment and well-being (E/CN.17/2008/4).

41. Land management includes protecting valuable cropland from degradation through erosion, salinization and desertification. It also involves making decisions regarding conversion of farmland to industrial or urban use. Competition for water resources demands careful water management to ensure efficient use of and access to water for agriculture and other rural sector uses. A large number of rural households also rely on forests and aquaculture for a portion of their household income, making sustainable management of those resources an essential part of employment policy.[8]

C. Improving employment through investing in rural people

42. Investment in rural people is important for increasing agricultural productivity and preparing rural people to take full advantage of employment opportunities. Lack of human capital is a particular problem in rural areas. Building human capital in rural areas through improving access to health care, education and training is of paramount importance to prepare rural people for productive employment. Implementing and expanding social safety nets, integrating traditionally marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous people into markets and providing them with educational and employment opportunities are essential. In addition, the quality of rural infrastructure, including health and education facilities, should be improved; improving access alone is not enough to build human capital if the quality of the facilities is poor, as is the case in many rural areas.

43. Rural populations tend to receive significantly less education than do urban populations. Often, rural children are kept out of school to help with the family farm or work for wages. Rural areas also face limited availability of quality educational facilities, and higher levels of poverty pull children out of school at earlier ages.

44. In addition to the urban/rural differential, there is also a gender gap in education. In sub-Saharan Africa there is about a one-year gap in education between men and women and a three-year gap in education between rural and urban residents, whether male or female.[8] In South Asia, the urban/rural gap in education is greater for women than for men. Rural women lag behind men by two years on average, but urban women lag behind their male counterparts by only one year. Even in regions where there is no educational gap between men and women, or where the gap favours women, as it does in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, the urban/rural gap in education persists for both women and men.

45. In many countries, low population density and remoteness of facilities also play a role: students must often travel long distances to attend school, which is particularly difficult when, as is the case in many rural areas in developing countries, there is no public transportation and roads are non-existent or of poor quality.

46. The presence of some basic social preconditions such as basic social protection is likely to improve the quality and quantity of human resources in rural areas. Quality education and training relevant to local markets and conditions should be made equally available to all. Incentives, such as cash transfers to encourage children's school attendance, may be necessary to counteract disincentives that are part of the rural context in many countries (e.g., child labour). Extension services that educate farmers about current research and provide training in good agricultural practices, including the use of new technologies that contribute to productivity increases and environmental sustainability, should be supported.[1]

47. Membership in cooperative enterprises is an effective means of achieving economic empowerment and engaging in entrepreneurial activities and wage employment, especially for women. In rural Andhra Pradesh in India, for example, women's cooperatives that emphasize thrift even more than credit have been effective in enabling women to take part in productive employment and engaging in microenterprises, such as retail shops. In addition, all-women dairy cooperatives, by providing post-milking facilities and marketing support, as well as training, cattle insurance and loans to purchase cattle, have enabled women to be actively engaged in the dairy industry. Also, membership in health, childcare and consumer cooperatives have enabled women to significantly reduce their household burden, giving them the flexibility to work (see A/62/154, p. 11).

D. Creating a favourable economic and policy environment

48. The generation of more and better jobs in rural areas requires an enabling legal and regulatory framework geared towards the promotion of growth and investment that is sustainable. Macroeconomic and financial policies should ensure stable and predictable economic conditions and should avoid biases against rural areas. Women play an important and often undervalued role in agriculture in many countries and therefore, in order to be successful, agricultural policies and programmes must address gender-specific concerns.

49. Gainful employment cannot rise without rapid output growth. One potential way to boost production might be to lower export barriers so that local producers can take advantage of higher prices abroad. Lifting barriers to domestic and foreign markets is likely to foster trade integration, which can lead to positive employment

outcomes in terms of quality and quantity of jobs. However, trade integration can also lead to job dislocation and increased income inequality and informality. Therefore, the impact of trade policies on decent work should be assessed on a country-by-country basis by Governments in consultation with social partners.

50. Access to financial services and risk mitigation is an important foundation for increased investment and employment opportunities for rural households and businesses. Financial institutions should cater to the specific needs of the local area and local market conditions. Financial services should also be made available to more women, youth and marginalized social groups. Governments can provide a supportive regulatory and institutional infrastructure to foster the development of financial institutions in rural areas. Specialized public financial institutions are one means of making financial services available in rural areas.

51. Poor farmers have distinct needs in terms of financial services. Farmers need access to insurance to reduce risk of loss, and they need flexible loan repayment schedules taking into account the seasonal nature of agriculture (in contrast to the weekly or monthly nature of wage employment). The growing trend towards providing a wide range of financial services beyond microfinance is a promising development in that area, which has greater potential to meet the needs of poor but productive farmers than do traditional financial institutions.

52. Public and private investment in research and development activities contributes to innovation and productivity in agriculture and other rural sectors. Such investment can also stimulate productivity gains. As previously noted, investments in agricultural research and development have slowed down dramatically in the past decade, despite high social returns from investment in the same period.

53. Mechanization, application of good agricultural practices and new technologies are needed to improve sustainable productive land use and agricultural productivity. New technologies may entail job displacement, but they also create new opportunities. Therefore, strategies such as economic diversification and retraining to manage potential negative effects on employment should be considered when implementing technical improvements in rural areas.

54. Rural producers' access to local markets should be improved by creating market information services, building roads to link farms to markets, providing assistance and training to small producers to help them identify potential markets and fostering equitable contracts between producers/farmers, traders, processors and retailers. Facilitating the development of small producers' associations and cooperatives would improve access to market opportunities.

III. Enhancing social protection to promote productive employment and decent work

55. Social protection is an integral component of the decent work agenda. Consisting of a set of instruments to support people against loss of income due to sickness, unemployment, maternity, invalidity, loss of breadwinner or old age, it is an essential mechanism for reducing and preventing poverty and insecurity. It promotes social integration by bridging the gaps between vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups. Enhancing social protection in an era of increasing

globalization and economic insecurity is critical to the implementation of the Social Summit and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, social protection is currently at the forefront of the social development agenda.

A. Social protection as a social investment

56. Excluding 80 per cent of the world population from social protection carries a high economic and social cost. It results in the perpetuation of poverty and the continuation or even increase of inequality, and makes it more likely that conflicts will grow, in extreme cases.

57. Social protection can have positive macroeconomic effects and contributes to sustaining economic growth and raising productivity in the national economy. Financial support derived from social protection helps to stabilize income, which in turn can offset cyclic swings in consumption, thus helping to maintain levels of aggregate demand and economic growth. Pensions have been proved to reduce poverty in old age, especially for women. It has also been shown that the existence of some forms of social protection increases school enrolment, improves school attendance and performance and broadens access to health care and better nutrition. Such improvements help build up a country's human capital, leading to higher productivity and economic growth.

58. The economic and social payback of a basic social protection package, or conversely, the cost of not providing it, is large. In addition to the benefits mentioned earlier, child benefits prevent damage to health and intellectual development caused by poverty and malnutrition that result in lower productivity in adulthood; social protection also supports women's empowerment; reducing extreme poverty and inequality improves social cohesion and helps create a more stable political environment favourable to sustained economic growth.

59. In sum, social protection is a social investment that can contribute to social and economic development, in addition to being a moral and ethical imperative based on social justice, solidarity and fundamental human rights.

60. Moreover, globalization and accompanying developments in the world of work in the past two decades have posed additional challenges for social protection systems. Income insecurity has increased due to sectoral shifts of employment away from manufacturing jobs, the informalization trend, and increased flexibility in work and contractual arrangements. That makes social protection more relevant than ever.

61. The ongoing global financial crisis, together with high food and fuel costs, further underscores the importance of social protection to poverty eradication and social integration. Therefore, the need for social protection systems to support the working women and men and their families who suffer job and income losses is urgent. Experience also shows that in times of economic crisis, basic pensions and child support are effective means to prevent a rise in poverty and the resurgence of child labour.

62. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, launched in 2005, is an interesting experiment in combining job creation, social protection and infrastructure investment in rural areas. Under the initiative, the Government made a commitment to provide 100 days of employment per year to every poor rural household in 200 districts, with the intention of rolling out the scheme to the whole

country. People employed by the scheme work mostly on infrastructure projects, such as road construction and water irrigation projects. Its main objectives are to uphold the right to work, reduce poverty and limit rural-urban migration of labourers. Countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia are piloting the scheme.

B. Main challenges

63. First, although most countries have some form of institutionalized social protection system, the coverage tends to be limited, especially in rural areas.

64. According to ILO, 80 per cent of the world's population has no social protection coverage, and in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, only 10 per cent have some form of rudimentary coverage.[9] Typically, the coverage extends only to workers in the urban formal sector, leaving out rural workers, self-employed workers, household workers, irregular workers and other informal workers.

65. The lack of social protection in rural areas is particularly glaring. Most developing countries afford very limited, if any, social protection to rural populations. That is partly owing to the fact that the rural economy is characterized by self-employment, high informality and high poverty levels that limit residents' payment capacity for contributory social insurance and other services. That reality also leads to low demand for services in rural areas and, therefore, low provision of those services.

66. There are also specific difficulties associated with rural areas. Remote location, low economic potential and being politically less favoured all present challenges to implementing social protection programmes in rural areas. That calls for appropriate instruments and modes of delivery. For example, in remote poor areas with weak administrative capacity, targeting and conditional cash transfer programmes may become impractical.

67. On the other hand, rural residents, especially the poorest, rely on subsistence agriculture or casual wage labour for their livelihood. They are extremely vulnerable to the risks associated with agriculture, such as unpredictable climatic shocks and seasonal patterns of food availability and job opportunities. Another source of vulnerability is the dependence on physical assets such as land and labour. Landlessness and/or any events that compromise physical capacity for labour further increase income insecurity. Those risks are rarely covered by formal social protection schemes in most developing countries.

68. Existing informal risk management networks based on custom or tradition in rural areas often rely on family ties or local power holders (either political or religious). That renders people without strong kinship or local ties, such as orphans and childless older persons, particularly vulnerable. Among the vulnerable social groups, rural women face additional hardships, since they often have to rely on male relatives for access to productive assets.

69. The urgent need to extend the coverage of social protection naturally leads to the consideration of funding for social protection, another challenge facing social protection systems today.

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[9] Wouter van Ginneken, *Extending Social Security: Policies for Developing Countries*, Extension of Social Security Paper No. 13 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2003).

70. In general, social protection is one of the most underinvested sectors. According to ILO data, in 2003, most developing countries devoted less than 10 per cent (and in most low-income countries, less than 5 per cent) of their gross domestic product to public social protection and health expenditures, while developed countries spend a much larger share of their gross domestic product.[1] Many existing social protection systems and programmes are underfunded, which erodes the ability of such systems to protect people from falling into poverty.

71. Given the current state of funding for social protection, a question that needs to be addressed is whether social protection is affordable in developing countries. The International Labour Organization has conducted research to calculate the costs of a basic package of social protection that includes a basic old-age and invalidity pension, child benefits and essential health care in 12 developing countries in Asia and Africa. The exercise concluded that such a basic package would cost less than 5 per cent of gross domestic product in all but the poorest countries.[10] But the burden on the Government budget is greatest in the poorer countries. It is the view of ILO that basic social protection is affordable in most developing countries, while external financial support is necessary for most of the low-income countries.

72. Developing countries also face difficulties in urban areas. The main challenge here is to expand social protection to cover informal workers, who typically live under the threat of chronic poverty, hunger and poor health. The informal economy tends to be significant in most developing countries. To tackle urban poverty, it is necessary to provide basic social protection to the large numbers of people employed in the urban informal economy. In Latin America and the Caribbean region, in particular, urban poverty has increased in recent years as the urban population has grown. Extending basic social protection to urban informal workers is especially important to reducing overall poverty in the region.

73. A challenge that is particular to developing countries is the lack of institutional and administrative capacity. In that regard, the capacity of the central Government ministry tasked with the administration of social protection systems (typically the Ministry of Social Development or Social Affairs) is critical for the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. The institutional and functional linkages between the entities for social development and other sectoral ministries are also important in order to maximize the developmental potential of such systems. Capacity and linkages at the local level, especially in countries implementing targeted programmes, are equally vital, since the identification of targeted populations and administration of programmes depend on local involvement.

74. Developed countries also encounter challenges in expanding social protection. Many Governments have undertaken reforms of their social protection systems to make them more efficient and responsive to changing conditions in the economy, in particular the labour market. Sectoral shifts of employment away from manufacturing jobs combined with a growing trend towards more flexible labour relationships, including part-time work, temporary work, informal employment and short-term contracts, have imparted greater economic insecurity to most groups of workers. That makes social protection more relevant than ever. Reforming social protection systems to meet the challenges posed by an ageing population has also

[10] "Can low-income countries afford basic social security?" *Social Security Policy Briefings*, Paper 3 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2003).

become necessary. A key objective of the reforms should be the sustainability of existing pension systems and the provision of social protection to workers whose status in the labour market does not fit the traditional mode of employment that affords protection.

75. All those challenges will need to be addressed, and can be overcome by political commitment and a pragmatic approach to implementing basic social protection.

C. Social protection floor

76. Expanding access to social protection for all citizens should be a main objective of international and national development policy. The rate of expansion will vary across countries and depend on the financial and institutional resources available. Universal coverage was achieved in most high-income economies by complementing contributory social insurance for the formal sector with subsidies for those in the informal sector. Likewise, some middle- and low-income countries are achieving universal coverage by expanding benefits and entitlements to those outside the formal sector.

77. The International Labour Organization, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and other stakeholders at the international and national levels, has started an initiative to promote discussion of the idea of a broad global social floor in response to the changing economic and social landscapes in the twenty-first century. Such a floor might include access to basic health care and primary education as well as social protection. Among other things, the initiative aims to extend basic social protection to all citizens in all countries to lift people living in extreme poverty above the poverty line and protect those who might fall into poverty in an economic downswing.

78. In order to implement a basic social protection package to reduce poverty, priority needs to be given to resource mobilization at the national and international levels. At the national level, affordability ultimately depends on a society's willingness to finance social policies through taxes and contributions. Financing social protection systems implies a degree of redistribution, either from taxed citizens to those outside the formal sector, or from the working-age generation to younger and older people. Political leadership and commitment to building societies that are inclusive and fair to all should be the foundation of all national efforts to mobilize domestic resources. Practical solutions and programmes based on specific country conditions should be explored. In most developing countries, especially low-income countries, basic social protection for all is most likely to consist of a network of schemes and programmes supported by public finance, as well as other sources such as cooperatives and microfinance institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations.

79. The international community also has an important role to play in support of developing countries' efforts. Given that the benefits of globalization do not reach all, a global social floor is indispensable to ensure fair globalization. In that regard, international macroeconomic policies and international trade and financial policies should be coordinated to support Governments that pursue the goal of basic social protection for all. It is also important that donors assist developing countries to build a social floor by providing necessary budgetary support to low-income developing countries. In addition to meeting the internationally agreed 0.7 per cent

official development aid target, funds could also be raised from various innovative sources of finance and earmarked for that purpose.

80. Given its critical contribution to meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, towards poverty eradication and its long-term positive impact on economic growth and social development, basic social protection for all should be accorded the priority it deserves. It is a pragmatic measure that is a powerful tool for poverty eradication, and it is affordable in most countries.

81. As the world faces the strong possibility of a global recession which could threaten the modest gains achieved in poverty reduction, the need to advance basic social protection in all countries has become even more urgent. Extending basic social protection to all is therefore not only a matter of poverty eradication in the long term, but also of immediate necessity.

IV. Global crises and their potential implications for employment and decent work for all

82. The current global financial crisis, economic slowdown and higher food and fuel prices are impacting the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, particularly in developing countries. By adversely impacting employment and decent work, the global crises are also undermining years of progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals, in particular, the targets on the reduction of poverty and hunger.

83. For many countries, especially those where progress in reducing poverty has been slow, the impact of rising food prices risks jeopardizing the gains of recent years. One recent study estimates that the global poverty rate has increased by 3-5 percentage points owing to the recent hike in food prices, and that there are about 100 million more poor people globally.[11] Those who were already poor are falling even more deeply into poverty. Most of the increase in poverty has taken place in South Asia and Africa, the regions which already have the largest numbers of people living in extreme poverty, with Africa being hit the hardest.[12]

84. The poor spend up to 80 per cent of their income on food and are therefore the most vulnerable to increases in food prices. The urban poor are the main consumers of food staples and are particularly affected. Likewise, in rural areas, a large number of small and marginal farmers live below the poverty line and engage in survival-oriented income-generation activities both on-farm and off-farm (see http://www.ifad.org/media/press/2008/25.htm). Of particular concern are landless poor people in rural areas. They are the main food buyers and are unlikely to be compensated fully by additional employment or by higher wages.[13]

85. About 88 per cent of the increase in urban poverty depth (measured by the gap between the average income/consumption of poor households and the poverty line)

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[11] *Rising Food and Fuel Prices: Addressing the Risks to Future Generations* (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2008).

[12] *World Economic Situation and Prospects* as of mid-2008 (E/2008/57).

[13] Technical information note entitled "*Rising food prices and their implications for employment, decent work and poverty reduction*" (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2008).

in the face of rising food prices is due to poor households becoming poorer. Households newly falling into poverty due to higher food prices account for 12 per cent of the total increase in poverty. While food prices have recently fallen, all forecasts indicate that higher prices are likely to persist in the medium term. Therefore, priority needs to be given to minimizing the effects of food inflation on the poor.

86. As poor households cut back their spending on food, there are serious risks for the nutrition and health of millions of poor children. It is estimated that higher food prices will increase the number of malnourished people around the world by an additional 44 million, to a total of 967 million by the end of 2008, up from 848 million in 2003.[13] Higher levels of malnutrition will impact future growth and productivity in developing countries. Also, poor households may be forced to exhaust savings, incur debt or sell their productive assets, further deepening chronic poverty.

87. Higher food and fuel prices also create pressure for poor families to cut back on other essential expenses. For example, they may not be able to afford the costs of schooling, such as fees, transportation and uniforms, and hence will be forced to withdraw their children from school. There are emerging indications that children are missing school as families reduce their spending on education to cope with the higher food prices. Policies to minimize the potential effects of higher food and fuel prices on nutrition, health and schooling are needed.

88. High energy and food prices have an impact on agriculture and small businesses. They have made food production more costly by increasing the energy costs of farming and creating a strong incentive for farmers to switch from food production to crops for fuel production. They have also resulted in job losses and widening inequalities.

89. Small enterprises are hit the hardest by the credit freeze and will have difficulties recovering. Access to affordable credit and other financial services is essential for small businesses to prevent bankruptcy, which has serious effects on jobs and incomes.

90. A recent study demonstrates[7] that the current global crises, especially the financial crisis, have severe repercussions for workers and their families, who are now suffering from job and income losses. Several developed countries have already experienced lower economic growth, and unemployment is on the rise. Global employment growth, though still positive, is expected to slow down in 2008, as employment gains diminish in developing countries.

91. Preliminary estimates indicate that the number of unemployed could rise from 190 million in 2007 to 210 million in late 2009. The number of working poor living on less than $1 a day could rise by some 40 million and the number of those living on $2 a day by more than 100 million.[14]

92. Also, the widening income inequalities are likely to increase due to the crises. A major portion of the cost of the financial and economic crises will be borne by hundreds of millions of people who have not shared the benefits of recent growth, as higher rates of unemployment and inflation eat into their meagre income.

[14] See ILO press release, 20 October 2008.

93. Effective social protection programmes, including social safety nets, are needed to reduce the adverse impact of the global crises and help the most vulnerable maintain access to food, education, health and other essential services.

94. However, economic slowdown will reduce Government revenues that support expenditures for social services and income assistance to poor families. There is also concern that international support for developing countries might fall victim to the financial crisis, if some are tempted not to honour their international commitments when domestic economic situations worsen.

95. That latest development in the international environment further compounds the challenges social protection systems face in many developing countries.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

96. **Recognizing that the majority of poor people in developing countries live and work in rural areas, and the unacceptable extent of underemployment and disguised unemployment in rural areas, the urgent need to provide social protection and employment guarantees in the wake of the ongoing energy and food price crises and the unfolding global financial crisis, the Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following recommendations to achieve full and decent employment for all in the rural sector.**

97. **The Commission for Social Development may wish to encourage Member States to:**

(a) **Address the quality and quantity of employment opportunities in rural areas by:**

(i) **Exploring and implementing innovative sources of finance for development of the rural sector;**

(ii) **Taking steps to reverse the historical decline in public investment in the rural and agricultural sectors;**

(iii) **Investing in rural infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation and conservation projects, with a view to promoting employment through the use of labour-intensive techniques;**

(iv) **Investing in research and extension services for improving agricultural productivity;**

(v) **Investing to improve the quality of and access to human resource development facilities such as schools and health-care centres in rural areas;**

(b) **Create an enabling environment for the private sector, especially for small farmers by:**

(i) **Improving access to credit and agricultural inputs;**

(ii) **Streamlining the legal mechanism for land title and tenure;**

(iii) **Improving information with regard to both domestic and international markets;**

(iv) Balancing international trade and domestic market development policies;

(c) Support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas by improving their access to credit and other support facilities, especially to better link them with the formal sector;

(d) Design social protection schemes for rural areas to address the serious decent work deficits in rural areas, such as seasonality, informality, low pay and hazards. In that regard, consideration should be given to the possibility of introducing schemes such as a rural employment guarantee scheme that guarantees employment for rural people, especially youth and women, for a certain number of days per year at a reasonable wage.

98. Given the enormity of the tasks and the limited capacity of Governments, the Commission for Social Development may wish to encourage Member States to promote partnerships with the private sector, civil society organizations, philanthropic organizations and other stakeholders to increase and enhance their contribution to the creation of decent jobs and the provision of social protection in rural areas.

99. The Commission for Social Development may wish to call on the international community to provide increased and predictable financial and technical support to developing and least developed countries, including by fulfilling their commitments in that regard.

100. Finally, the Commission for Social Development may wish to invite the United Nations system to strengthen its technical support for rural and agricultural development in developing and least developed countries. The United Nations system may also wish to develop a better methodological framework for collecting data on rural unemployment which would be consistent with widespread rural poverty.